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The SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

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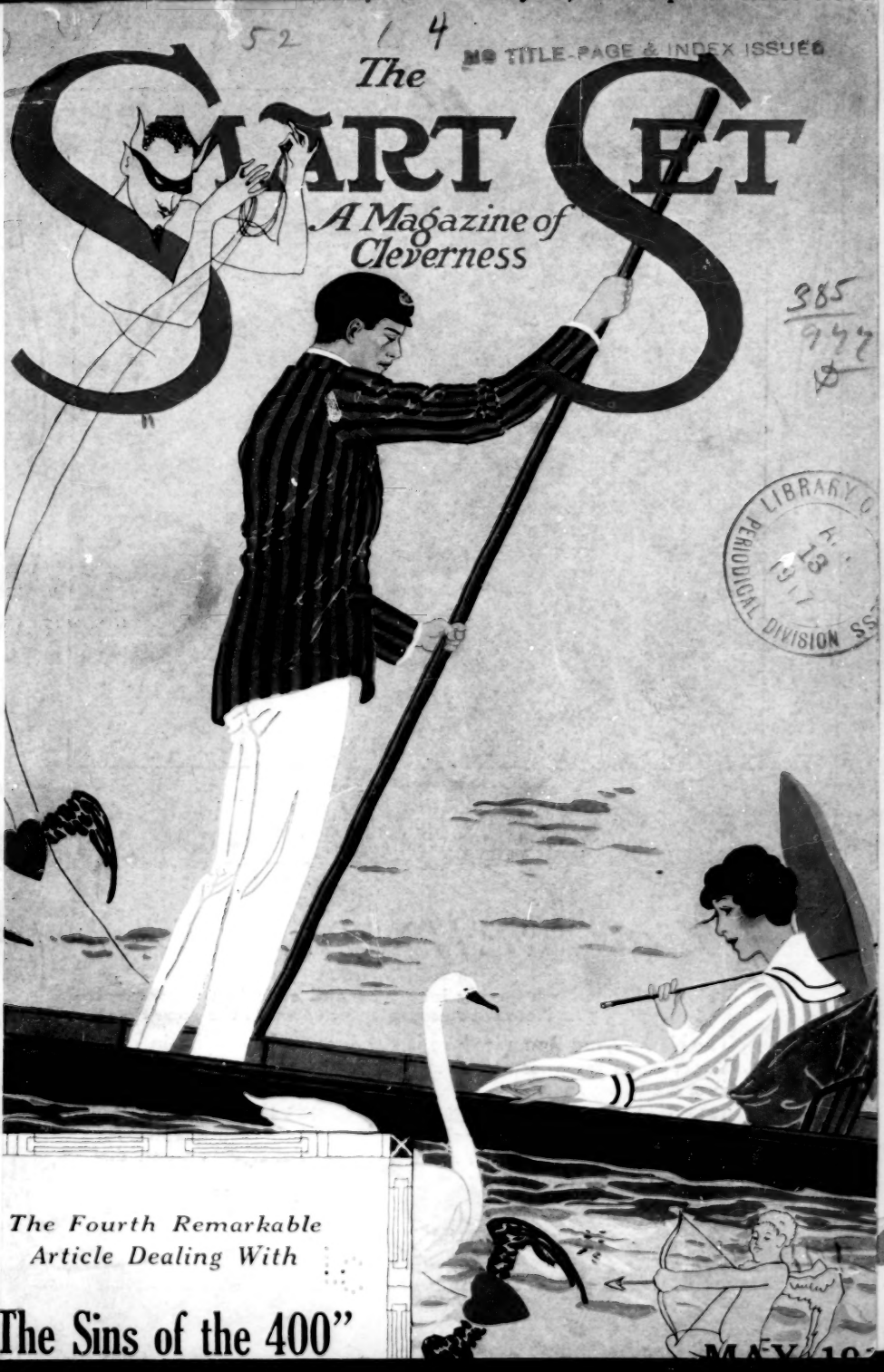

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The Fourth Remarkable Article Dealing With

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ALBERT KELLER,
General Manager.

Vol. LII MAY, 1917 No. 1

The SMART SET

Manuscripts *must* be addressed, "Editors of THE SMART SET"

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AND

BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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Vol. LII MAY, 1917 No. 1

The SMART SET

The Aristocrat Among Magazines

PRAYER

By Harold Cook

I ONLY ask of the gatekeeper
Who tends the door to that invisible and mystic land
That his eyes smile a little sweeter
On her; support her strongly with his gentle hand.

For she was timid in this world
And lived like rare flowers, stilly in the dew,
And all her argosies were furled
Within the harbor of a land that no man knew.

For in the tulip fragrance of
Her hair lay passionate drowsy dreams of summer nights
With starry vastness in our love
And vagrancy of souls a dream of dawn delights.

And so I only ask of the gatekeeper
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THE HUSBAND EXPLAINS

By Patrick Kearney

MY friends were puzzled, of course, when my wife left me the morning after we were married and never returned.

So was I. And I thought for a long time, trying to remember what I had done to hurt her or to disappoint her in me. For weeks after it happened I was completely mystified.

Then the reason occurred to me. It was all the fault of my cursed absent-mindedness.

I remember it all very clearly now. I had got dressed first that morning and was sitting at the breakfast table, reading the paper, when she came in. I was greatly interested in what I was reading, and I scarcely knew she was there.

When I had finished eating, and was putting on my hat and coat preparatory to my leaving for the office, she came over and kissed me.

Then it happened.

I pulled out my little red book and absently asked her her telephone number. . . . .

THE BACHELOR

By Clarissa Wentworth Collins

HER voice was silver-sweet and airy
Stolen by her from a fairy;
Sang she blithely all the day,
Danced she lightly like a fay;
Life will teach her, I would say,
She cannot always be so gay;
Then she kissed me and away.
Ah, I said, she will not stay
She will come again some day,
She will learn it does not pay
To sail her bark so far from bay.
That was long ago in May . . . .
Now I'm old and bald and grey.

HER ONE EXPERIENCE

By G. Vere Tyler

I

MADGE WESTMORE, quickly changing from her discreet bath costume to a snowy frock, irreproachable bath shoes and a spotless white felt hat, stepped out of the bath-house and made her way somewhat grandly down the crowded promenade, a close, pale-blue parasol in one hand and a gold bag in the other.

There had been a titanic storm the night before, and, as usual, it had been followed by weather of extraordinary loveliness. The clear, yellow light invited to movement and gaiety; the blue sky, so sharply blue that it almost hurt the eye, demanded that it be admired; beyond the strip of beach the ocean glowed and glistened like a prodigal waste of diamonds. And the breeze! How refreshing, how lifting, how thrilling it was! How it played and wantoned with things! Feathers in hats, women's skirts, the flags flung from beach-side shops, the gaudy awnings of the hotels, the streamers from the caps of nurse girls, the flapping jackets of the young bloods! A wonderful day, to be sure—wonderful and a bit heartless. A day to stir one, and yet, in a subtle way, to daunt one.

On a sudden impulse Madge entered one of the open-air restaurants along the promenade, and took her seat at a little table where she could look out upon the crowd and upon the ocean as well. How like Paris in spring—and how infinitely more spacious, more alive, more exhilarating! The warm sunlight that fell upon her, in the corner she had selected, was curiously grateful, while all along her arms and legs she could still sense the cool caress of the sea water. It was delightful to feel so warm and yet so cool.

While she made herself as comfortable as she could in the stiff chair, and placed her parasol and bag where she could keep an eye on them, it seemed more than novel to her; it was almost unbelievable! She never dreamed it would invigorate her so to be alone this way, freed of all surveillance. She was feeling so fit, she had almost to repress the sparkle in her eyes, and—she smiled at this—she had an appetite, too! How good the things that were being served about her smelt! She ordered a much more elaborate luncheon than she had intended, the waiter helping ever so politely.

"Perhaps Madame would like some consommé Fleury?"

"Yes," hesitatingly.

"And then maybe something from the *buffet froid*—some grouse *à la gelee de Porto*, or some *galantine* of duck?"

"No; something warm."

"Then some sweetbreads Marsilly? Or perhaps a grilled *entre-côte Tyrolienne?*"

Madge decided for the sweetbreads, with Roman salad and an ice following. It was, in its way, a tempting little banquet, and she proceeded through it with a queer sense of adventure

She looked back over the years, and could scarcely remember a time when she had thus lunched in public alone. At twenty-six she was still curiously *naif* and inexperienced. Her whole life had been spent conforming to the plans and desires and notions of conduct of others, and in doing what they

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demanded of her. It occurred to her that she felt today as she used to—how long since she had thought of those days!—when she was a little girl. After that period, well, things were different; obligations of this and that sort were thrust upon her. She did what one of her sisters told her she would have to do: she fell in line. At nineteen her parents married her off, and she fell in line then, too, assuming, quite cleverly, considering her temperament and inexperience, all the responsibilities it entailed upon her. Town house; country bungalow that was little less than a house; servants; cars; all the rest of it, and an exceedingly dull life. She was so distinctly married for money and to further a business connection for her father that—and, of course, in this she was rather stupid—it had never occurred to her to think of love. She was married for the benefit of everybody, and she took up her existence from that standpoint. She was at times very lonely.

Her husband's absence in Europe had caused her, after a most wearisome period, broken only by long, solitary motor rides, to cable for his consent to come to this place, which a woman friend—the one who most nearly approached being considered in that light—had written her was "simply fascinating."

The day before the one in which we discover Madge disporting in such an, to her, airy manner, the day, in fact, of the big storm, this friend, who had proven her friendship by cat-like remarks born of Madge's very splendid wardrobe, had been compelled to hurry away to New York on some legal business. All that day, in fact as long as the storm raged, Madge had really imagined herself grieving for this absent one. Seated at the table, as we have seen her, she would very much have liked to admit her relief over her departure, but it would never have occurred to her to do this. So she forced herself, barely conscious of the effort, to wish her friend was with her, and decided upon sending a picture postcard—she had already purchased the card, several of them for home duty—to that effect. That off her mind, and further deciding, with a slight grimace of self-reproach, not to write her husband "until tomorrow," she returned to thoughts of herself and her highly novel situation.

"Why," she said under her breath, with something very nearly approaching a baby's laugh, "I've just been introduced to myself, and," she looked out at the ocean disporting its diamonds, "the world!"

II

She was in the act of dismissing the waiter with her order for coffee when *he* appeared.

It was no doubt the part of such a day, and Madge's enjoyment of herself and the suddenly discovered world, that just such a man should appear. As a fact it did seem—his arrival upon the scene—a part of the rest, and as such perfectly natural. She wondered, though, since it was so natural, why his sudden advent, as out of the blue sky, had caused her a little shock that was like the sting of insects.

It certainly, while he was good-looking enough, was not his good looks. Madge, and she was quite scornful now that she had become so worldly, was too used to seeing good-looking men from a distance for that! But, she rather excitedly thought, there was about this man something quite separate and apart from his looks that caught the eye. He had about him the air of the idler, the charming fellow, the connoisseur of life, an air calculated to captivate and hold the fancy of anyone!

On closer inspection she almost retracted her first conclusion as to its not being his good looks that had attracted her. Having removed his panama hat, and placed it in an empty chair beside him, he had rather a forceful face—well, if not forceful, distinguished, something—she didn't know what. She decided upon distinguished, and then

broke down completely and styled him handsome, very handsome! She felt a bit light-headed for some reason as she came to this conclusion, and irrelevantly turned her attention to his apparel. He was a well-dressed man! Madge's husband, like many another middle-aged spouse of a young wife, gave a great deal of attention to the matter of clothing, and she knew a good deal about male attire herself, and could decide in a moment what kind of a tailor a man patronized, and upon the credit due in such matters. This man was not only well dressed, but what was of far more importance, he was at ease in his clothes, a gentleman to his finger-tips!

How silly of her to be thinking all these things! It was really most absurd! But, and Madge almost laughed, she couldn't help it, though! Why, he —and Madge very nearly screwed up one eye—reminded her of Lou-Tellegen, her favorite actor. He had that kind of polish that held one so, and a certain poise that was terribly magnetic.

Madge felt that she was thinking out things quite brilliantly for *her* and kept it up. He was, she concluded with emphasis, *noticeably* graceful. It must be admitted she was certainly correct as to this. He *was* noticeably graceful. It was the kind of slow, studied grace that appears to keep virile action under control and that is found only in the male. Perhaps there is nothing more dangerous to a woman than this kind of grace in a man. It has upon her the effect of warm, gentle breezes, and with every gesture or movement of the body seems to enfold her in invisible embraces.

Madge felt this, and as one given over to the first intoxication of rare wine, she studied his face. It was a remarkable face, far more remarkable than she was aware of. A face which, while betraying what the moralist might determine evil passions, was yet lit up by the spiritual; a face delicately cleft as to features, and whose countenance might confuse as to whether he were saint or sinner. It was a countenance in which all emotions might easily find a home, and was topped off by a charming expression of disdainful levity that might or might not be regarded as a mask. This disdainful, perplexing levity would surely fascinate, might perhaps at times irritate, but would certainly never jar. All this and far more was in the face of the man confronting—clean, sweet, ingenuous, and very lovely to look upon, too—tremendously so, or he would not have looked upon her—Madge Westmore . . .

He was accompanied, this stranger whom Madge had so justly found interesting, by a spry little old gentleman who wore spats and looked seventy. Somehow Madge associated the little old gentleman with the race-track, or, at any rate, with the sporting class. And that was what she concluded—that the neat little old gentleman, who plastered his remaining hair so nicely around his bald spot, who had such narrow hands and feet, who dressed so sprucely and wore spats, was, and Madge almost laughed at her thinking thus, an old sport.

They ordered highballs and paid little attention to them. The younger man talked, talked a good deal and quite seriously. She concluded that they were talking business. She was rather surprised that *he* should talk business. She had supposed he belonged to that class of man who never thought of business, or anything serious. Here poor Madge did not prove her astuteness. In matters of business the gentleman in question could not only be serious but flintlike. Otherwise he might not have piled up so relentlessly his millions. His seriousness caused Madge a bit of uneasiness, so that she herself became quite serious about him. She wasn't so sure that he was a man a woman could trust—in fact, she felt quite sure he might not be—and she was rather glad that her two younger sisters were safely at home, way out in California. "Those two girls" would never have to marry for money, or run the risk of meeting such a dangerously fascinating-looking man. . . .

And then her coffee arrived and as

the portly waiter, who breathed rather hard, was removing the dishes, she was quite surprised that she had gone so far as to consider him in the light of a dangerously fascinating man. . . . What was she thinking about?

III

She hadn't time to ferret this out, for suddenly there was a commotion and everyone, she with the rest, was on his or her feet. . . .

Yesterday, she was soon to learn, was still persisting in offering reminders of itself. A young girl, hardly more than a child, thirteen, someone said, had just been washed up on the shore. Madge turned very pale as she heard this, and something else about a blue dress. The blue dress seemed to confirm things for her.

This poor little girl, this fragment of the havoc of a great storm, who was she?—how had it happened?

People were rushing out of the place, or gathering about the open front. Everybody was talking, or trying to see. A couple of policemen arrived and as the crowd fell apart for them to pass she plainly saw, for a second, the little figure in blue, still being tossed at the edge of the ocean.

It excited her so that she made a spring and joined the others looking so eagerly out from the front. Among them was the stranger and her spring landed her beside him.

An old woman spoke to him. . . . Everybody was talking quite as though they knew one another. She felt impelled to speak, too, say something with the rest. So as her next neighbor turned and glanced down upon her she flashed a startled glance at him and said: "How horrible!"

To her surprise she read not the slightest horror in his face. His eyes even contained a smile that might any moment twinkle.

"*Something* has to happen!" he assured her lightly.

It sent a shudder through her. Her mind had never conceived of a person who could thus lightly accept, and that in the very moment of its happening, a horrifying tragedy. He seemed almost amused by it, as though it, and the sudden commotion of people, people all interrupted at their luncheons, was something contrived for his benefit—something to entertain him!

She moved off a step as though repelled. He could be like this, she thought, and there was that little girl in her blue dress, no doubt by now stretched out on the sands of the beach, awaiting an order to be carted away! Suddenly the sunlight became cruel and the glory of the day dispelled. She was not able, however, to resist again looking at the man who had thus shocked her. He met her plainly horrified gaze, not only with a smile in his eyes, but with one upon his lips, a smile that penetrated her like an acid and very nearly stole her strength if not her senses. It puzzled her, this enigmatical smile that could come to life in the face of a tragedy, a tragedy, too, that involved a little girl. She would like to dive into the mind of such a man to see—alas poor Madge!—what else there was!

As she thought thus, he took her arm in the gentlest manner in the world and led her back to her table.

"Did you see the old gentleman I was with?" he asked, taking his seat opposite her and bending forward.

"I did!" answered Madge, a bit flustered. She felt suddenly afraid of herself and of him, as well, for taking possession of her table in this free and easy manner and opening conversation with her. Here was something new! A man plainly an adept in all the forms of manners, was yet ignoring them. It seemed almost a reproach directed at her. But it was not. It was simply part of the technique of Mr. Cyril Fenwick. He had seen Madge emerge from her bathhouse, seen her pause in her renewed wonder of the day, seen her trip so airily (airily for her, and this he sensed), up the street, pause hesitatingly, then boldly (boldly for her), enter the restaurant. He had

followed, at a discreet distance, all these innocent manœuvers of hers, and, as it were, at any rate in intention, joined her at the restaurant. He was quite conscious of her when he removed his hat, and still quite conscious of her when he talked so seriously to the old gentleman—for her benefit. He had not ordered the little drowned girl washed ashore, but, as it all turned out, he might almost have seemed to do so.

"He's quite a wonderful old chap," he said, glancing quite lovingly at the old gentleman who had taken his seat and was giving his attention to pouring vichy from a siphon into his Scotch.

Somehow Madge envied, as, no doubt, the stranger had intended she should, the old gentleman this loving glance.

"He's quite old, isn't he?" she inquired timidly, while distinctly assuring herself that this strange man should *not* be seated at her table.

"He's about twenty-three," returned her companion, with the same amused expression in his rather china-like but strangely beautiful eyes.

Madge, on account of the peculiar effect of them passed quickly to his hair, which she noted was very fine and not very thick. Seen at this close range it had a Titian tinge. What fine hair it was!

"Hadn't you better go back to him?" she ventured, betraying her embarrassment.

"I'd rather stay with you"—again the quizzical smile—"that is"—and as he made a pretence of rising he looked quite as though reproved, "if I am not intruding!"

Madge almost caught him by the sleeve. It was just as though she had asked him to go, and been very rude.

He kept his seat.

"I heard a funny little story today," he said, bending a bit forward, and looking, she thought, teasingly into her eyes. "Would you like to hear it?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "not with all that going on!"

They seemed to be carrying the little girl to a closed conveyance that had arrived.

"All what going on?" His eyes were fixed on hers.

"Why," and Madge looked her amazement at him, "that poor little drowned child!"

He had his back to the front. "Why, you aren't still thinking of that, are you?" he asked.

"*Of course* I am!" she flashed. "Do you suppose I am *perfectly* heartless!"

"I had supposed so, yes! Aren't you? What did you have for luncheon?" he added, glancing at the still disarrayed table in front of her. "Do you know the specialties of this place?"

"No, of course not! I've never been here before!"

"Well, I do! Let me order a biscuit tortoni for you, may I? Of course, I mean if you will let me eat the better portion of it!"

"But what about your old gentleman friend?" Madge asked, amazed at her sense of yielding.

"What old gentleman friend?" He was gazing at her now in a way that brought an alarmed blush to her cheeks.

"Why," she answered a little indignantly at the quizzing, "the one at the table over there!"

His eyes never left hers. "You aren't still thinking about him, are you?" he asked with that sportive manner of speech that both fascinated and irritated. He seemed almost to be making fun of her and yet, in a breath, forcing upon her that she was his sole consideration.

There is nothing so disarming to a woman as being puzzled as to a man, and Mr. Cyril Fenwick was an adept in the practice of this very art.

She reproached herself, not only for having entered into conversation with—well, in another it would have been—an insolent stranger, but that she was, under his influence, only she wouldn't admit this, ignoring the tragedy outside. She forced herself, as a duty, to look away from him to the beach.

The excitement there was all over. The crowd was dispersing, some people were walking away; others were talking in groups. She thought how heartless the ocean was. Having perpetrated this deed it was just moving in and out as thought nothing had happened. Nor had the sun changed one iota its bright shining. This callous sunlight still hurt her.

When she looked back at him he was studying the menu. He turned to speak to the waiter and she caught sight of his profile. Madge always regretted this moment. It ever seemed to her that it was this glance at his profile that had finished her. Why? She didn't know. There is always a moment in such matters—the one moment. . . .

Having dismissed the waiter, after giving accurate instructions, he turned to her. "I'm going to tell you the story now," he said. And he did.

IV

It was an amusing story, with sufficient impropriety lurking somewhere about it to cause her a bit of anxiety, an impropriety, however, that disappeared at the critical moment; a story that had wit in it, the glamour of a worldly touch. It led her a good way in their acquaintance and gave her the impression, since she had yielded to the intimacy of it, and allowed herself to be amused by it, of not being able to turn back. It had made her laugh, apologetically 'tis true, but quite merrily. The strange part was that he hadn't responded to her merriment. The story told he seemed instantly to forget it, to treat it as though it hadn't been told. Done with, he dismissed it as he did everything else.

Madge felt that she had been too much amused by it, that she should only have smiled. She couldn't follow his leads, he abandoned them too quickly. It confused her.

And that was the power of Mr. Cyril Fenwick over the fair. While he charmed them, he kept them guessing. He put them on a tight rope ever in fear of their balance. He never rewarded them by any applause for what he made them do. He kept them on tenter hooks. This charming, and at the same time, torturing of women was his one supreme recreation, and he was past master in the art.

With a deferential apology he left her a moment and went over and spoke to the old gentleman he had almost reproved her for considering.

She watched him curiously as he walked away from her, pleased by the fine quality of the blue serge suit he wore, and the exquisite grace of his movements. It pleased her too to observe his marked courtesy to the old gentleman—what fine manners he had. It was as though she had a personal interest in these things—his perfect deportment.

He returned to her table carrying in his hand his Panama hat that he had picked up from the chair, and there was — alas poor Madge! — something about that particular thing, the way he had done it, that charmed her out of all proportion. She wished she could decipher this. But the thought and everything else was lost in the quite tenderly patronizing smile he gave her.

As he took his seat, Madge saw the waiter approaching them with a champagne bucket in his hand. Had he carried a levelled pistol she couldn't have been attacked by greater fright. She flushed suddenly and almost sprang to her feet. She saw her home, her husband, her whole life as a background. She grew quite pale. What was she doing here; how had it all happened? She didn't know—never would know.

"You look anxious," said her companion. "Have you suddenly remembered an appointment?"

"I never make appointments!" said Madge on the defensive.

"No? Haven't you a dress-maker and hair-dresser, and manicurist, that sort of stuff? I thought all women had!"

"Of course!" He had her at a disadvantage again. For a moment she hated him. He was looking at the wine

and this gave her another disarming glimpse of his profile.

"Please don't have that opened," she said, putting out her hand, "I couldn't think of drinking any of it!"

"No? Why not? Don't you like it, or have I offended good taste? I have, *of course;* wine in an open air place in the middle of the day. Shocking, isn't it?" And he leaned way over while the waiter opened the bottle and looked at her as though the wine and everything else was forgot.

"It isn't that!" she exclaimed. "I shouldn't take it!"

"Doesn't it agree with you? I'll order something else!"

"No! I shouldn't drink with *you!*"

"Oh!" he fell back from her, *"me!* I don't count!" And the waiter filled their glasses.

"Here's hoping the little girl is having a fine time in heaven!" he said, lifting his. The tantalizing smile played in his eyes like sunlight on water. They sparkled. "I wish her every happiness!" he added.

It seemed terrible to her, this levity over that poor little girl. It alarmed her. A tear sprang to her eyes. And yet it was as though she were under a spell, as though she *had* to drink that wine! She raised her glass. As she did so her hand trembled a bit. . . . Over the rim of it he still looked into her eyes. . . .

V

"I'd like," he said, as he leaned over to refill her glass, "to take you out in an old fishing boat, dirty up your little shoes, lose your hat for you, and bring you home feeling you had had a Hell of a time! Would you like that?"

"I don't think I would"—Madge already felt the first glow of the wine—"like to dirty up my shoes and lose my hat!" And she laughed. . . .

"That's because you haven't tried it!"

"It *would* be funny," said Madge, "to go out in an old fishing boat!"

"Why, you are not still thinking about that, are you?" he asked, laughing.

The color was coming and going in her cheeks in a very lively manner. This way of his of catching her up, actually gave her a little twinge—it hurt. He had all the leads and kept them. She decided after he had dropped a subject not to refer to it again. It was as though she magnified the importance of what he said. It made her feel small. As to her, she was one who always liked to hold on to an idea that caught her fancy. She liked to dive into things and discover if there was not yet more for her in them. He, it seemed, got everything there was in anything in a second and then had no more use for it. He seemed to scorn instantly what he had a moment before given his attention to.

She sensed a kind of cruelty in this, not definitely, a mere suspicion, that was dispelled by the almost passionately tender glance he was giving her, like one appraising something he has already in his mind decided upon as a possession. In a glance was a certain compassion, she thought, as thought he read her whole life and was sorry for her. It made her feel sorry for herself—very sorry.

This man whose acquaintance she had made fifteen minutes before had set her imagination to work. It was as though he had revealed herself to her in a new light, shown her a dormant part of her nature that could respond to levity. It couldn't be exactly wrong—for she had already felt it coming on before she met him, when the whole world had suddenly seemed to her so wonderful . . .

A big cloud came over the sun at this moment, giving her a new world of gray sombre tone. She felt even more elated by the softness everything assumed, and looked out for a moment at the ocean all dark and mystical. And then the sun came out again and the splendor was renewed. She seemed to be noticing these things, the effects of nature as she never had before.

Oh! it was so wonderful to feel as she was feeling now. Her heart almost ached as she remembered what she had missed in life. All her past, the dull routine of it, came up, and she felt astonishment at the way she had lived. Why, Neville had just been her jailer! The entire memory of her life with him, this man whom she had married without knowing, and to whose formally monotonous life she had, and that without even a protest, yielded herself to. Why, in all the time she had known him, he had never sat with her in a gay place like this and ordered wine in the middle of the day! They had been to places, of course, suppers after the theater and the like, but it had all been so stilted, so by rule, as to what was orthodox—just man and wife! Neville had never told her a little half-naughty story—not that the one *he* had told *was* at all naughty—in his life! She had been a fixture about the place, that was all, like the electric light chandeliers that he lit up and turned off when he was through with them. She felt mortified, humiliated, resentful. . . .

The wind had subsided, the last suggestion of the tragedy—if she excepted one small group of men still on the spot—had disappeared. It was just beautiful outside! She dispelled intrusive memories by fixing her eyes steadily on the tall, handsome man, whose face, and this Madge impulsively thought, would stifle *any* memory.

"Where are you stopping?" he asked suddenly.

"The Glenmore."

"You don't say so?"

His intonation disturbed her.

"It's a charming place, isn't it?" she asked eagerly.

"I hope so."

"For my sake?" inquired Madge a bit coyly.

"No, for mine."

He didn't tell her that he and the old gentleman were joint owners of the hotel and were here for a few days on his yacht, overlooking the manager and the business end of things.

"Why do you say *that?*" she asked.

"Say what?"

"Why, about the hotel!"

He bent forward with a new expression in his eyes. "I'm not thinking about the hotel," he said, "I've forgotten it, haven't you?"

There was nothing to bring the color so furiously to her cheeks.

"Shall I walk home with you?"

"Oh! no!"

He smiled. "Have you a pretty name?"

"I don't know that you would consider it pretty."

"If you'll tell it to me, I'll call you up some time about the sailing boat."

"Madge Westmore, or rather," said Madge very properly, "I should say Mrs. Neville Westmore."

"You don't say!" He knew her husband slightly, a man of affairs. It increased her importance. She thought his manner became suddenly very cold.

"Since you won't accept my escort, Mrs. Westmore, if you will pardon me"—the waiter was puffing forward—"I will leave you to enjoy your coffee alone."

"Certainly," said Madge, with equal formality, but feeling the world coming to an end at the thought of his departure. "It's terrible," she burst forth, "my having sat here with you without knowing you!"

"You excuse me?" he asked, ignoring this and rising.

"Certainly," and she went pale, "of course!"

A moment later he was seated with his back to her at the table with the little old gentleman.

She felt suddenly utterly miserable, and what was more, sitting there with her eyes on his back, humiliated She could have burst out crying. . . .

Having managed a few swallows of the coffee, she stole very humbly out of the place.

VI

For three days she waited for his telephone call. Every time the bell rung she started. It made her terribly

restless. She was unhappy. Not only was she back to an existence familiarly monotonous, but she had to face the embarrassment of having flirted with a strange man who had dismissed her indifferently at the end of it, just turned his back on her and apparently never given her another thought. It was simply abominable, the whole thing—she must have been mad. . . . Her stay at the seashore was spoiled. She didn't dare go down to the beach, or near their place of meeting, for fear of his thinking, if she should run across him, that she was on the lookout for him—and besides she might miss his telephone call.

How perfectly absurd she was—she *must* be crazy! And then she would feel very warm and push her hair back, or straighten up in her chair very suddenly. She must forget it, that was all, the whole unfortunate—and she would emphasize the word unfortunate—incident. If it wasn't for the fact of that telephone bell serving as a constant reminder she might!

The third night, while undressing for bed, she felt quite ill, and scarcely slept any. And all the while she lay pitching and tossing, she kept saying: "Absurd, ab*surd!*"

On the morning of the fourth day, while seated on the broad verandah of her hotel she saw him go by in a scarlet car with the old gentleman seated beside him. She thought her heart would leap out of her body. When the car turned the corner and was out of sight, she recalled that he hadn't even looked her way. He had simply forgotten her, forgotten all about her, and she, without even knowing who he was, had lunched with this man!

She resolved she would shut him out of her mind. But when she went to her room to dress for luncheon, without the least intending such a thing, she sat down in the first chair she reached and cried. She had been insulted by this man, who had as though he had the right, made her reveal her personality, who she was, and then ignored her. She wondered what Neville would say if he knew she had so glibly given his name to a stranger who had forced her—it seemed to her now he had forced her—to gossip with him at a public restaurant on the beach. . . .

And at that very moment her telephone rang. . . .

He was sending his car for her. Three miles up the beach he had found the sailing vessel, would she come along? No? Oh! All right. He didn't want her to think he had forgotten her, that was all. If she should decide any time she would like to go she could call him up He gave a number and before she could speak he had rung off.

And then Madge, Mrs. Neville Westmore, almost cursed herself for having said no. . . . She wrung her hands. . . . She was almost hysterical. What did it matter, what did anything matter in this world!

She looked out of the window. What a beautiful day! Just the kind of a day, soft and misty, to go out in the old sailing vessel, and dirty up her shoes and lose her hat, and—

Big, hot tears filled her eyes and would overflow. They rolled down her cheeks. At this very moment, he, Mr. Cyril Fenwick, was countermanding an order on the yacht for two.

"It's postponed, Ralph," he said to the servant, "until probably day after tomorrow."

In the evening he passed through the rotunda of The Glenmore with a gentleman. He was in evening clothes, and was just the kind of man, tall, slender and gallant looking, whom evening clothes become. To Madge, thus attired, he was a maddening apparition. She was seated in one of the big arm chairs against an onyx column, and had she put out her hand, as he passed, she could have touched him.

The beating of her heart almost stifled her. He hadn't seen her; not only hadn't seen her, he hadn't even glanced around to see if he might see her. He was the kind of man, Madge openly avowed to herself, who would

drive a woman mad. There were, as a fact, many women who would have agreed with her As she had envied the old gentleman being with him she now envied his present companion to whom he was giving such polite attention. Had he appeared alone she would—she feared she would—have run after him. It was as though, she thought excitedly, he had fortified himself against such a possibility. She had provoked him, she supposed, by not responding to his invitation.

Why hadn't she? She wished—oh! how she wished—now she had! "What," she again recklessly asked herself, "would it have mattered!" She wasn't going to be here long, anyway! Only one more month, Neville would be home, and then back to it all. A feeling of awful depression came over her at the thought! Her dining-room came up, and the meals served there, meals when she and Neville sat six feet apart and ate in silence. She didn't feel she would ever be able to enter that big dining-room alone again; she decided upon the exclusive use of the breakfast-room, at least until her husband returned. . . . If only for the rest of her life she could take her meals at that gay place on the beach. There it was all magic. . . .

The thought of home suffocated her. . . . It wasn't the man—why, she wondered, was he talking so long at the desk?—of course it wasn't! It was just that she had had one gay light-hearted day that was different; one day that made all the other days of her life seem like Sundays with all their arrestments and limitations. Like *him!* How could she when all he had done was to force his indifference upon her and hurt her. . . . Why, every time she thought of him it was as though she was slashed by little daggers. But how the smile in his eyes had soothed the pain of this! What was it? What *was* it? . . . Alas Madge! Love! . . . Love, of course, and with Madge the most violent form of love, since it was love in direct opposition to everything rational. . . .

Let it not be forgotten that this rather unusual and extremely pretty woman, with her tea-rose complexion and soft tan-colored eyes, glowing like topaz beneath her brownish amber-tinted hair, had never loved. She had not even lived; she had existed, first in an aimless way, and then for the benefit of her family—she, nor did they, make any bones of that—in a half tortured way. The rose garden, and beautiful fruit trees at home; the privilege of just living simply—simply as compared to her present life—while it had not inspired or lifted her to any heights, had comforted her. She was not unhappy then, even if she wasn't happy.

But the splendor of a home with a fine entrance, rare Oriental rugs, costly furniture, beautifully carved silver, decorated china, all these things, owned by her husband, in the care of supercilious servants and supervised by her, had not comforted. They had weighed upon her. And then suddenly a change! Life offering an entirely new presentation in a light-hearted, care-free way, and a man who had simply appeared and revolutionized her entire being. It was almost as though she were a piece of idle machinery that with a touch he had set in violent motion. And yet, and this thought caused her a terrible spasm, he might—had he not already done so?—laugh at her for being in just this state.

She couldn't imagine him taking her seriously, taking any one seriously, even himself. He was one of those tantalizing persons who skim lightly over the ice, without effort, who cut remarkable capers, with never the possibility of a fall, and who laugh at the clumsiness of others even if they met with serious accidents—were hurt. A man whom one could only associate with wine and fine raiment, a box at the opera, as never bothering to drive his own car—an idler, a light weight, who presented only his own surface for consideration and who only desired the surface of things for himself. A man—but poor Madge was yet to learn this

—created by nature to charm women and abandon them.

This—she had scarcely been able to think clearly at all—she did not know. What she did know was her restlessness, the first acute misery she had ever been conscious of, a longing to be with him, a longing that was stronger than all the things that life had built for her to stand upon, a longing that was like the drunkard's thirst, a thing to be satisfied, gratified at any cost. . . .

He left through another door. And for an instant everything turned black about her; she thought the place would collapse and put out her hands. . . .

In the morning she telephoned. He came for her at once in the red car, laughed at her taking what he had said about the sailing vessel seriously, and lunched her on the yacht.

Madge never knew how that afternoon passed. It seemed to melt away. The little old gentleman was there and very amusing—very agreeable in fact. She was left a whole hour to herself with books. As a host he was irresistible. At five o'clock he had her rowed ashore and she motored to the hotel alone.

But that night he was on hand at the hotel. At midnight they had a little supper together in the grill-room, after which he parted from her at the elevator.

VII

After a very wonderful week in which she had not once "dirtied up" her little shoes, nor lost her hat, but her head completely, he suddenly, and that without a word, disappeared.

When she went to the beach and looked out, the yacht no longer rested upon the waters. It had disappeared also.

In addition to the wonder it was a curious week that Madge, sometimes with the color beginning at her throat and mounting to the roots of her hair, looked back upon. Sometimes she grew suddenly pale and looked like a statue. Sometimes she experienced moments of happiness, it had all been so strange and new, such a wonderful revelation of life; sometimes she was miserable as only the forsaken can be. She could not think very clearly about it, all these unexpected happenings, or anything. She could only liken it, this week that still held her in its clutches, to the playing of lightning that never struck.

Granting the impropriety of their meeting, the impropriety of the whole thing, there was nothing for her to regret. He had entertained elaborately —sumptuously even, but through it all he had made not one single demand upon her that could cause her one shadow of self-reproach. There hadn't been a moment which an onlooker might have criticised. They had, it seemed to her, simply played like two children. Just what their games of play were she didn't exactly know. That, however, was the only way she could define it—play. Always he took the lead and kept it; always he dazzled her; always he puzzled her; always she had the memory of the color he brought to her cheeks, her throat and temples, or caused to recede.

He told her lots of little stories like the first one, stories that made her anxious, but never ended by offending. And just, as at first, having told the story he apparently cared little about the impression it made. In like manner he sent dishes away, but half tasted, and ordered others. If he provoked her into talking he lost interest in what she was saying before she was through. He never allowed her to hold to a thing. It was as though he was forever squandering, just carelessly throwing things away.

There was a kind of torture in it that was distracting; the madness of climbing up but to fall down, grasping at gorgeously tinted soap bubbles that disappeared as you put out your hand. And there was not a moment spent with him that was not maddeningly fascinating, not an hour, as she looked back, not replete with subtleties that made torturing memories. She was like a person who, having been on a spree in

seductive environment, was at home again finding home life intolerable.

Of course, *he* was the spree. He made all women to whom he gave his attention drunk. There was an indescribable charm about him; there was that peculiar grace that he made to appear as indifference. It seemed to swing one upon soothing currents. He had merely to change his position, get up from his chair, move about, or take a seat, and one—one meaning a woman—followed him with fever-lit eyes. Not only did Madge go about with fever-lit eyes, she was in fever, fever that brought her to the point of delirium.

What troubled her was that he was elusive, undecipherable, she couldn't fix him, arrange him so as to give herself something to hold by. If he paid her a compliment it was apt to be an offhand one that might almost offend rather than please. He teased her, patronized her, and in the very moment of her taking offense, would bestow upon her a glance of complete understanding of her, a glance of such rapt sympathy that it would appear to her like honeyed compassion.

She felt that he knew her; that she was an open book to him; the purity of her thoughts—her life of sacrifice. She read this appreciative tribute to her in his eyes, eyes that were the very next moment as coldly indifferent as a lake that has frozen over. He generally parted from her as though he had suddenly taken a dislike to her. It was this that would keep her restless, prevent her from sleeping. Over and over she would attempt to discover what she had said or done that had so suddenly provoked his indifference. He left her the night before his departure in just that way. This continuous trying to find out why, what she had done, made her feel flighty. She was utterly desolate, bereft. Her head ached; she could think nothing out clearly. Her life was in eclipse. She was startled by the sudden change from light to dark like one going from bright sunlight into a dungeon. And what was worst of all, his abandonment mortified her; she was ashamed of herself, the kind of shame that brought scalding tears to her eyes, not only when she was in her room alone, but in public, at table, walking the street, anywhere!

Every day she went, sometimes once, sometimes two or three times, to the beach and looked out to where the yacht had been anchored. Way off in the distance she would suppose other boats might be it. It was maddening. She *was* mad, just as he had intentionally made her. His every act, including his abrupt departure, had been to excite her mind about him, excite her desire for him, for his presence, and he would no more have at this juncture whetted that desire than he would really have tossed her about in an old sailing vessel.

And yet it was this suggestion of an old boat that had first caught her—landed her. It had freed her of being in a conventional frame of mind, of thinking of herself from that standpoint. Every single thing that he had done had been, not carefully planned, for after all he was simply living out himself, but with an eye to the future. She must be brought up to the pitch of madness. It was an old story with him, an oft-played game, the game, in fact, outside of those other games in which as a cold passionless business man he piled up wealth, of his life.

At the end of two weeks of wretchedness, during which she lost flesh and her color, Madge returned to her home and had the shades raised.

For six whole weeks she heard nothing from him.

VIII

As unexpected business kept her husband in Europe, there was nothing to come between her thoughts of the man who had so successfully infatuated her. And so those thoughts not only never ended, they never ceased. At times they were very desperate thoughts. To be able to stand once more in his presence she would, she felt sure, gladly have given her life.

There was now no reservation in her way of thinking; she made no effort at self deception. She was madly, blindly, passionately in love, and nothing else on earth mattered or counted She could conceive of his demanding nothing of her that she would refuse. And he had gone! Where. . . . Always she thought of him as on the yacht, and it would seem to her that this yacht was just sailing of itself away from her to some distant unknown shore. . . . He was lost to her forever. She would sit with folded hands and staring eyes. . . .

And then one day, when all hope was gone, and she was the loneliest, most miserable woman on earth, he showed up.

She was looking out of a window on the second floor when the red car rolled up to the door and stopped. He caught sight of her and waved to her brightly. She almost lost consciousness and was surprised that she had the strength to feebly wave back.

She had endured two months of anguish; she felt herself a wreck, and wondered if she looked it. It was the first time she had given a thought to the effects of the havoc wrought in her.

When after a hurried toilet she went down to receive him, his brilliance, that something that a man takes on in the city, and leaves with it when he seeks the seashore or the country, seemed to strike her an appalling blow. He was not *less* than her fancy had pictured, he was far more. His gayety as compared to her dejection, her cast-down condition, put him on a pinnacle quite out of the pale of her reach.

"Where have you been all this time?" she asked a bit tremulously, and trying to smile while she noted how well the motor coat he was wearing became him, the effect of the fur collar, and how white the one ungloved hand looked.

He laughed at her, lifted her face by lightly placing the knuckle of his fore finger under her chin, and looked pleasantly into her eyes. He even spoke of them.

"If I had eyes like yours," he said, "I'd burn 'em out with red hot irons!"

With a laugh he then surprised her—gave her the surprise of her life. He kissed her! It was not a satisfying, scarcely even a disturbing kiss. It was short, uneventful, almost careless. It might be likened to a disappointing *hors d'œuvre* that a discriminating chef, however, knew how to whet the appetite with. It was a mere quick touch of his lips, but it excited in her instantaneous ravenousness for them. She wanted to draw them again to her own—fasten them there endlessly—forever. . . . But she didn't dare. She was afraid, afraid of the least move of hers, the shadow of a spoken word that might, and her heart ceased to beat, cause him to go away.

"Good God!" she thought, as the past weeks gripped her.

She was afraid to breathe; not only that, her self-confidence fled. What had *she* to offer that would hold *him!*—keep him from going!

And he was thinking how satisfyingly lovely she was in her ill-concealed longing for him that had already partly effaced her bloom. How easy to restore her to charm, re-establish her lost confidence! She was in his eyes a type, a type whose characteristics he knew well. An unaroused woman would go mad through love. He would no more have given her a satisfying kiss in this moment than he would have played his trump card for a trifling stake. It wasn't worth it. To her, yes, but not to him. She was as completely his at the seashore as she was now, but if he had pressed her infatuation then to a climax he would not be concerned in her to-day. . . . She was worth a more prolonged interest.

So for three days he gave her of his best in lavish entertainment.

They motored together. He lunched or dined her in secluded corners of fashionable restaurants. He preceded his arrivals in prodigal expenditures in flowers. Aesthetic candy and fruit shops increased their sales on account of her; books came, the rarest as well as the latest being among his selection.

Never in all the seven years of her married life had her bell rung so often, or, it seemed to her, had so many things arrived. There was tremendous excitement in it for her—for her especially, and this Mr. Fenwick knew.

The day before his departure, his departure known to himself but not to her, he took her in his red car way out of town to a fine hostelry, crowded during the summer months, but except on occasions, deserted now. They had the big dining-hall practically to themselves. It was in this place, this big empty dining-room, that Madge recalled her first actual folly

It had been a happy day, perhaps the happiest of her entire life. All the time they were motoring along beneath a strangely blue sky, and with the fresh autumn air, sometimes filled with the delicious odor of burning leaves, intoxicating her, Madge was saying to herself, she would never forget it. It is safe to say she never did forget it.

It had seemed a bit gloomy and quiet when they entered the deserted hostelry. Solitary hall lights burned dimly in the daylight; a listless clerk paid slight heed; the dining-room was indeed a "banquet hall deserted." And so Mr. Cyril Fenwick beset himself to enliven things. No sooner had cocktails disappeared, than the wine flowed, and Madge, whom excitement, the excitement of rapture, had caused a loss of appetite at home—what time had she for eating alone?—soon, in a most surprising manner, felt herself under its influence. A silly thing that she did, or was the cause of his doing, a thing that resulted in folly, was *certainly* never forgotten by her. It was an act that ever persistently presented itself disproportionately.

On their table was a half-wilted little plant. For some reason, or rather wine reason, she grew maudlin about what she called "the poor little thing." It was thirsty, she said, "dying of thirst;" the waiter, and how emphatic Madge was, must water it at once.

"Water!" he had exclaimed, "why, the poor thing has been drinking water all its life!" And he lifted the bottle of wine that had just been opened and—ah! how gay he was in that moment, and she, too—poured the contents over the plant. How it had foamed and sizzled, and how she had held on to his arm and tried to make him stop while she laughed, couldn't stop laughing. Ah! she had never known a moment like that, such a moment of play in all her life! . . . No wonder it was always to come up.

When they left the hotel darkness had settled upon the world and before they reached home the stars were out.

As the air had grown more chilly with the coming on of night, he had added furs, until it seemed to Madge they were buried in these soft warm covers. He did not kiss her, but once he let her head rest against him. She no doubt slept, for she remembered how surprised she was to find herself thus, her head upon his breast, his arm about her.

He must have awakened her, for how the city burst upon her gaze! . . .

The next day he left for his home in Chicago.

IX

It was well on in February before he returned to New York.

He quickly noted marked changes in her. For an instant he felt her apprenticeship might have been over prolonged. He seemed to see her through a smoky veil. Her eyes looked out at him hopelessly above black circles, the rings were loose on her fingers, her throat was slenderer.

She came forward to meet him as a somnambulist might, wholly unconscious, or going forward without the strength to do so. And in spite of his first fear he met all this with a smile in his blue eyes. He decided that she had suffered enough, that her months of doubt had made her equal to any flight he might demand of her. She would make no resistance; there was nothing for him to overcome. All these things had been absorbed in her longing for him. They no longer had any

meaning for him. She was stupid, bewildered, lost to the world, herself, incapable of reproach.

"I'm going to dine you in my home this evening," he said, adding to her infatuation by the sunlight of a smile that never failed to intoxicate her.

"Are you?" she asked, while a tremor passed over her.

"I have a Turk there whose cooking will surprise you!"

"Will it?"

Her eyes, a bit aglow, were in his. But she suddenly felt tired, stupidly tired. As a matter of fact she was almost wishing he would kiss her once, one kiss, the kind that had lingered in her mind, that would some day be hers, and go away. She was tired, utterly tired; tired out. It was all that she seemed to know—to realize. She didn't feel equal to him; he would discover this and leave her again. The idea aroused her as from a trance. Leave her! Ah! Her eyes closed as if in pain, and she caught at the lapels of his coat.

"What is it?" he asked laughing a little.

"I don't know," and she took her hands down and moved away from him, "I believe I am ill! If you went away—left me in that way—as you have—I would die!"

"Nonsense," he smiled, "you're dreaming!"

"No, no, it isn't nonsense, and I'm not dreaming. I'm awake, terribly awake! I love you—no, don't make fun of it—please don't—I love you—I've suffered as no woman ever suffered on this earth before! I liked it at first, when the flames were all leaping. They hurt, but I liked it. I was tremendously excited, I suppose. But I'm not excited any more; not a flame will leap; I feel dead. I can't stand it! I can't, really—it's killing me!"

They stood in silence. It had grown quite dark during the past few moments and outside the snow had begun to fall. It came down leisurely in large swirling flakes. In the sudden gloom of the room her white face with its beautiful tortured eyes looked hopelessly wistful, passionately tender.

But if she was living through her feelings he was living his feelings through his brain. He knew all that she was feeling, knew the height that through him she had reached. While he was a man fashioned by nature for fickleness he in no way underestimated his fickle experiences. He saw love as a mathematical proposition, nine-tenth preparation, one-tenth realization. But he had never been able to find fault with the sum as worked out by him. If it was his destiny to victimize women to an erratic temperament, since it was instinctive—was his nature—was he to blame? He had never, in the usual acceptance of the term, been faithful to any woman, never been able to do aught but glorify occasions for them. It sufficed for him, why not for them? Why couldn't a woman reach up to the glory of the evanescent? He didn't know. As a matter of fact, he didn't care. He bent to her.

"You are quite sure you love me?" he asked in a low voice, and saw the tremor that passed over her.

His tenderness so long withheld and now so palpably expressed stirred her to the depths. It transformed her misery into happiness: engulfed all her suffering of the past weeks. She tried to speak and could not. So, merely with a manufactured wan smile, she nodded her answer. Her eyes, wonder-lit yet terrified, then fastened steadily in his. . . .

He could see that back of her love was terror, terror of herself, of him, of all the conventions of life. Her ecstasy was blinded with fright. . . . She was like one facing the supernatural—something he fears he is not equal to.

Returning her rapt gaze he laid his hands caressingly upon her shoulders. There were no flickering taunts in his eyes now, no cruelty, no teasing. A fierce steady light shone from them, in which there was infinite compassion and tenderness. . . . In the moment he loved. . . .

Presently he seated her beside him

and continued to look upon her like a man who has created a living, breathing statue from cold marble and is ready for its unveiling. He had the power to translate this to her, so that her stupidity forsook her and she understood. All the emotions awake in him began to find an echo in her. In his thoughts he had lifted her to supreme importance.

How silent it was! . . . She felt a bit sleepy. Her eyes closed for a moment, and opened in a kind of stare as though in search of something. It seemed to her that she had become saturated with bliss—that she was in a dream. It made her want to escape *all* reality, even herself, and give herself up completely to dreams, visions of the wonderful, the wonderful and the unknown. She found it difficult to endure these sensations; her eyes continued to feel heavy; her lids began to open and shut. . . . She feared she would fall asleep. A beautiful smile lit her features s impelled, entirely against her will, she offered him her lips.

When the kiss was over she aroused herself. She even stood up, for a moment forgetful of him, as she tried to figure out the situation, what it all meant.

He got up quietly, folded her in his arms, closed her staring eyes with his kisses, and then pressed a passionate one upon her mouth.

"Go," he said finally, "get your wraps, heavy ones. I fear," and he smiled delightfully, "we are to be visited by a heavy snow storm."

She reached her room amazed, but it was the amazement of rapture. She was a conventional woman, thoroughly so: she had never broken a social law of any kind in her life. . . . She seemed to have been blown into this situation on a hot wind that had overtaken her from some beautiful unknown land.

X

In the afternoon of the following day he telephoned that business called him out of town.

If Madge had been blown into a situation on a strong, hot wind from a beautiful known land, it seemed to her that she had now been blown by a biting blast to a dull barren rock. . . . But there was nothing for her to do.

During the weeks that followed much of her time was spent gazing listlessly through windows. . . . That red car might appear. . . . She spent whole days motoring through the streets with the hope of catching a glimpse of him, or of locating the place in which she had dined with him. She could only remember that they had motored through a driving snow storm to a building, and that it was big, and white in color scheme. She could recall vaguely the usual marble hall, lights, servants in attendance, an elevator that moved swiftly. . . . But where? . . .

There were many such buildings as that one in New York. There was a kind of madness in her motoring through the streets by the hour with the hope of finding that particular building. She felt it was. But then, and a queer smile would settle around her set lips, she *was* mad. Mad for the sight of him, his smile, the strange color of his eyes, the magic of his bearing, the slenderness of his hands, his feet in their highly polished narrow shoes! And Madge would clench her fists and breathe as though the word contained some strange comfort for her. Mad! Mad! Mad! . . .

There were moments when she burnt from head to foot in shame as though she had found herself in consuming flames. But these would melt into pleasurably tempered memories—memories that never failed to end in her suffocation. Sometimes, after she was in bed, she would lie on her back and fancy that she was dying. . . .

In such moment she would pray that God would allow her one moment of his presence before it was all over. But the pale light of early morning would speak to her of life, another day to be lived. . . .

If only, she would think, her spirit had taken its flight in that warm won-

derful place while his lips had clung to hers! The ecstasy of love is, or so she thought, the border land between life and death, earth and heaven, why couldn't she have entirely made her escape into heaven? Why had he not —surely God knew that he was cruel enough—aided her by a dagger thrust in her heart?

Where was he? . . .

Why did she never—she who was ever on the hunt—meet him anywhere? . . .

Spring came with its warm promise; early summer came with its pale tiny fairy-like leaves breaking out in a night wherever the glance might fall; birds chirped and flew with new found happiness; wraps were cast aside; little girls of that magic age from eleven to fourteen appeared airily in the streets as from fairy realms; older girls grew wistful and talked by the hour of men and what life held; poets left their firesides for forest and stream; the old wandered forth at sundown to dream of the past and bless God for their remaining senses. All things were alive, busy, full of movement, laughter, song, and gentle tears, and yet—he never came. . . .

XI

It was in August that she ran across his name in a list of prominent men at a stag party at the very hotel she had been stopping at on that fateful day of their meeting in the gay open-air restaurant on the beach.

He was there again! She knew but the one thing!—where he was—she could go and find him. . . .

It made her dizzy. It was as though all her veins had suddenly become uncorked and were pouring burning fluids through her. . . .

It took her some little time to collect herself. Even with her vision cleared her body was in a tumult, her hands trembling. At last she had located him! No shipwrecked mariner had ever hailed the first glimpse of a far distant ship as she hailed this sight of a man's printed name in a newspaper. She saw herself thus, as a shipwrecked one, starved, half crazed by isolation, on the verge of insanity through suffering. So dumb and deadening had been these weary months in which she had given herself up daily, hourly, to slow torture, that it was only in this moment that she actually recognized the anguish she had been through. It was sweepingly upon her now, anguish in all its forms, anguish of the desolation, the deserted, the insulted—how often she had said that—insulted, insulted—anguish of the used, the lightly dealt with, the worn shoe tossed aside—a thousand thoughts filled her mind. . . .

But with her eye on the printed name all these things were forgotten; she seemed to see into a blinding light! She laughed, she cried, she fell down, burying her face in her arms, she was up again dancing like some wild savage with her hands flung above her head. She had sighted the ship! Never mind now what she had suffered; never mind his ill treatment, whatever he had done —she didn't *care* what he had done! Maybe fate, something beyond his control, had torn him from her! Never mind that! One glimpse of those blue eyes with a laugh in them, one merry jest from his lips, one—ah, God!—pressure of those lips upon hers, and what was suffering. . . . Gladly, gladly, she would go through it all to experience the joy of seeing him again.

In supreme moments conditions perish. She saw no conditions; she was deaf and dumb to any wrong perpetrated upon her! This man had given her her one experience in life, through him had come the meaning of life, the excuse for all its pains, the immensity of a person's existence on earth.

Her eyes blazed, her throat was parched, and presently her teeth chattered and she feared her knees were giving away under her. She put out her arms in the direction she fancied he was, stumbled to a chair, dropped into it, and looking straight ahead of her, began to sob, sob out her happiness, her indifference to her past—or her future. . . . She knew but one

thing. . . . She was going to him—going to find him!

XII

She arrived at dusk and found the porch crowded. Some had dined, some were about to dine. Parties were arriving, as she was; parties were leaving.

The place was gayly lit, and full of people; worldly men feigning wealth; overdressed women feigning indifference; cleverly dressed girls feigning interest, eagerness, piquancy. Those little girls, too, girls from eleven to fourteen, were there, full of movement and airy grace, charming in their flat-heeled shoes and bared legs, all with big ribbon bows holding their curls. Girls of that age had always interested her; nothing, she had ever thought in all the world, was half so pretty and engaging. She smiled as they passed her. But upon what would she not in this moment have cast a half tremulous smile? . . . One must smile at the thought of heaven ahead. . . .

As she paused on the porch to collect herself before entering to engage her room, she noticed one of those young girls, dressed in white, with brown socks on and gold brown ribbon on her hair, standing in front of a man, the upper part of whom was obscured from her view. On the other side of the man a small, dark-haired woman was seated, and next to her, a boy of ten in a rocker much too large for him. Almost she cast a little smile there, upon, what she mentally designated, this family group. And then, with one of those quick buoyant gestures, natural to her age, the girl ran off, and she saw that the man she had been screening was he—*her* man! . . .

A little sharp cry escaped her. Indifferent eyes fell upon her, for a second, and among them, his.

His alone lingered, but with no more apparent recognition than though he had never seen her before. He turned and entered into conversation with the woman, his wife, of course, and the boy.

Madge did not know how she engaged her room and found herself in it. In fact, she had no recollection of taking the room. It seemed to her that she returned to consciousness to find herself there, standing in the centre of it, dumb and inanimate. It might have been for all association of ideas a room in some new world she had reached.

Finally a sharp knock on the door caused her to start violently and feel the blood rush through her. . . . Her trunk was brought in. She made no remark about it, offered no tip.

Nothing came to her to say—there *was* nothing to say. She was conscious of but one thing. She felt light, an object without weight, and all the things about her seemed the same—light, flimsy, trifling—that together with her might any moment move away or be dissolved. . . .

She hadn't removed her hat. . . . She just stood there. . . . And then—it might have been minutes, it might have been hours, she never knew—there came another knock. She supposed she had answered "come in" for *he* entered. . . .

"Don't be nervous about my coming to your room," he said, "I own this hotel—it's all right."

She aroused herself to wonder at his saying this—as if she cared. She looked at him—she the conventional woman to whom the observances of social customs were the most serious things in the world—ready to laugh in his face. As if she cared! As she made no reply, but merely stood staring, drinking from his face as those perishing on the desert might who behold the waters of a spring, he went on quite calmly.

"The fact that I own this place brings me here occasionally. I used to have the old gentleman, who was part owner with me, to look after things. He died last winter."

"Do you think," Madge asked after quite a pause, "that what you are saying interests me? That I care why you are here—what brings you, or who is dead?"

"Perhaps not. But it is in my position as owner here," and he shot a

sharp glance at her, "that I suggest you had better leave in the morning. You may have noticed that I have my family with me."

"It is your family then? You are married?"

"Naturally," he returned coolly, "a man of my type is too egotistical to withstand the desire to reproduce himself. That is *why* I married."

She stared at him, amazed that he could look so stern, that there was not a trace about him of merriment, of teasing, not a shadow of the things that had been a part of him during the brief period when he had given his time to her entertainment. She saw him as men knew him, the cold, relentless business man whose self-control and cruelty had amassed millions. And strange or not strange, this passionless image of the man, who had maddened her for more than a year, maddened her more now. There was about him the polish of refined metal, the piercing rays of a flawless diamond, after all a man of breeding, an aristocrat who could cover any craven deportment with an irresistible manner; a man who used himself in the world with the grace and magnetic projection of a great artist on the stage. Compared to him, as opposed to the reflected polish of him, Madge, this woman who was sweet and lovable, and ingenuous, felt clumsy, heavy, in no sense his match, altogether unequal to him. She thought, poor thing, for so some women love such a man, if only he could command some service of her, and her mind flew to things, abject things that she would do if only he would bid her do them! When she spoke it was to say aimless things.

"I came here," she began feebly, "to see you. I saw from the papers you were here. The minute I saw your name I *had* to come! I've been dying, *dying*, these past months, every day since you left me as you did"—she began to wring her hands—"so cruelly, cruelly! I'm dying now. Can't you see it?"

"No, and I suggest again that you leave in the morning!"

He turned to go, indifferently, carelessly, as he had that first day when he turned from her to the old gentleman at the table—the old gentleman who was dead. . . . In a flash the latent tiger spirit that dwells in all women like her, women of sweet nature and strong passions, came to the front. She made a leap for him, caught up the hand nearest her and deliberately drawing the skin together fastened her teeth in it.

Then she stood back from him, no longer beautiful, with a livid, distorted face, panting.

He had turned pale from the pain. Beyond that he made no sign.

"You should find someone to love you," he said quietly.

The tiger moment had passed; she was standing before him now, weak, miserable, tortured, full of longing for him, ready for more brutal words, brutal treatment. She knew this, that the last spark of spirit in her had expired, that she was now utterly abased, debased. Overwhelming self-pity attacked her, tears gushed to her eyes, and she began wringing her hands again.

"How can you," she whispered, looking at him with all the wonder of her infatuation, her blind, unwarranted idolatry shedding a holy light over her countenance. "How can you," she repeated softly; "after—after—" She broke down.

"You are not still thinking of that, are you?" he asked, with a ghost of the old cynical smile for the first time lurking in his eyes.

"Yes, I'm thinking of it; I'll always think of it! Do you mean to say that you've forgotten it—that you don't?"

"Not to my disadvantage, nor, Mrs. Westmore, should you. I have never regarded an incident, either in my business or social life, except for what it represented to me at the time."

"Then why didn't you tell me that—why didn't you prepare me?"

He merely smiled at her.

"Do you mean," and she looked hopelessly at him, "that—I am never to see you again?"

He moved off and showed her the back of his hand. "I should say," he remarked coolly, "you are not a safe person for one *to* see!"

And he turned, having cleverly put her ultimate dismissal on herself, and walked out of the room.

For a full minute she stood as one transfixed with her eyes on the closed door. She turned suddenly then, seized by tremendous excitement. His words had given her hope. She would go down, see him—see him in some way—beg forgiveness of him for having done that—oh! that she could have hurt him, given him pain! She would tell him that she must have been insane for the moment. And that would be the truth! . . . She was! . . . .

XIII

Possibly it was this hope of reawakening his interest, or it may have been to look beautiful in his eyes—to be for once the most beautiful woman in the world—that caused her to decide to dress herself resplendently, to weigh herself down in jewels that might, like beacon lights, attract him. There was something ablaze within her that she felt thus aided would convert her loveliness into beauty.

She rang for servants and had her trunk and bags opened; she ordered a pint of champagne to give her courage. Perhaps there was infinite pathos in this, her intuitive knowledge that she required aid when all her pulses were leaping in a declaration of triumphant daring. Just what this triumphant daring was leading her to she didn't know. *He* was downstairs, and her mind was upon that one idea as one's eyes are fixed at times upon a pyrotechnical display in the heavens that blind and may destroy. She was in the moment in the throes of love at its wildest height. In such moments the ordinary being becomes extraordinary, passes the limits of sanity to a blissful realm of insanity. Unsatisfied love, or a love disdained, has its moments of reward in madness. Madge was mad. In a way she knew it.

When she was fully equipped for her undefined attack she was seized by sudden fear. She was afraid to go downstairs. She thought of silly things, such as appearing before the wife and declaring herself, or wishing she might be armed with a pistol. She ought to kill him if by her killing him she could rid herself of the pain of desire for him. And then she stood still and imaged him. The burnished hair, the blue eyes with their smile, the high-bred nose, the defined contour of the jaw, those clean-shaven, masculine lips from which light, teasing words had issued, sometimes to please, sometimes to hurt, those lips that had denied her kisses, touched hers lightly to provoke desire for them, but that had also given kisses such as no man—and this she honestly believed—had ever or could ever give.

And through all this excitement of false hope the truth showed grim. It was over. She knew it, felt it, and looked into a future as barren as a road of stone. Perhaps the only definite thing that controlled her was that she could see him again, rest, no matter how, the ache of her eyes to look upon him. And there is no greater love than that which has gone beyond the hope of response or relief or touch, only that the eye may rest upon the thing that has killed.

She descended feeling all these things, and strangely enough, once among the gay throng that greeted her, as she stepped out of the elevator, the hope that had flickered and burnt out returned. Had he not always forsaken her to return? Maybe he had come so boldly to her room to caution her as to the presence of his family, maybe, and a little faint gasp caught in her throat, it was his intention to see her later.

She took her seat in the rotunda and with luminous eyes looked on at the gaiety surrounding her.

Placarded about the place were notices that a certain dancer would ap-

pear during the intermission of the public dances. In addition to the placards, with little pictures of the dancer in the corners, several posters were on display.

Madge had heard of this dancer and a bit of interest diverted her for a moment at the thought of seeing her. She got up, and, walking over to a large framed picture of her, studied it. It was a sensuous picture, one in which lids, bosom, arms, limbs, hung limp and heavy with passion. In the dark, smouldering eyes that looked out with insolent self-confidence there lurked the insinuation of the cyincal smile that his blue eyes held. As with him it was all brain and sense, here art, but no heart.

The first feeling she experienced as to this dancer was one of envy. Here was one who had realized herself, achieved, had the courage to project her personality; become somebody, somebody who could have her pictures exhibited in a fashionable place like this, and keep fashionable people on the qui vive for her appearance. It was wonderful, she thought, to have been able to single oneself out for consideration. She looked very long at the picture, almost passionately into the burning black eyes. The woman was not beautiful, made no effort at proclaiming beauty. She was something far more than beautiful. What? . . .

Madge did not know. But it was there, it seemed to her, issuing in streams even from the tips of pointed fingers. She looked wistfully at the tips of those fingers with their gleaming nails sharpened into points like little daggers. And she, the conventional woman with her own nails politely rounded, who had ever regarded ultra effects of her person as ill-bred, longed with all her soul to be like this woman—ill-bred, lawless, even vile—as was her reputation, for but one hour, one hour in which to charm him through something new to give. And in this also she was infinitely pathetic.

She turned finally with a wilted feeling, her self-confidence flagging, very nearly gone, in fact, to the chair she had vacated. She began looking about her again, hoping that he might appear, pass through, be seated somewhere. She sat there a long while, but got no glimpse of him. When the dancer was announced she got up and followed people to the ballroom. He might be there! . . . She scanned eagerly the assembled throng. . . . He was not among them. . . .

She had neither lunched nor dined. Her head felt light. She was afraid she might put out her hands stupidly and so kept them pressed to the arms of the chair or clasped hard in her lap. The strain of thus controlling her hands was exhausting. She wondered if she might not faint, and, if she did, if he would come to her aid? Her lips trembled piteously at this thought, and she tried to fix her attention on other things.

Finally the dancer appeared and she looked upon her as one in a trance. She saw her a flying figure in scarlet and yellow, who wore a cap with a gold tassel that played about her left ear. Madge thought she looked like Theda Bara in a vampire rôle.

When the dance was over how the people applauded, and how she, the dancer, bowed and bowed and bowed, with the yellow tassel bobbing about her ear.

The moment she had disappeared the orchestra struck up a new air and the guests were on the floor again, glad to resume their dancing. They seemed to Madge to put the entire place in rhythmic motion.

Where was he? . . . How like him not to be where one might expect him to be! She saw his wife and was filled with compassion for her. She saw the children run up to her, both of whom resembled him, and she hated her. She had served him. There was something for *her* to hold by. If only *she* might have borne a child for him. . . . She was quite carried away by this thought. . . .

She went back to her chair in the rotunda to watch for him. Finding it occupied, she took another, and sat

there and looked out, trying at times to control the staring of her eyes.

Later she found herself in her room beside the window, recalling that it had grown empty downstairs, and that a man who was extinguishing lights had paused and stared at her. She supposed it was then that she came to her room.

She had not seen him! . . .

A pale light came through the opaque transom. Outside the moon was rising, as large, it seemed to her, as the head of a barrel. Its pale silver surface fascinated her. She could not take her eyes from it. . . . All the sounds of the hotel had subsided. The elevator was no longer going up and down. Finally the light that had lit her room through the transom went out.

She turned with this change and looked about the room trying to distinguish things, until at last it was all quite clear, the room itself and all its fittings were re-established. She experienced a sense of relief over this. . . .

And then her heart leaped. Perhaps *he* had ordered that light extinguished! . . . For a few moments she was quite buoyed up by this thought. . . . She almost believed it was so. . . . But as the moments passed it died out, and she just sat there, hopeless, helpless, as one conscious of dying, but unable to fight for life. With a little wearied change of her position she wished she were dying, that it were possible to just sit here like this and then not be. She wondered if he would care, and her lips quivered. She felt like this once when she had received a whipping at the hands of her mother, the being she loved best on earth. She couldn't have been over seven, but her lips had quivered all day, and she had experienced the same kind of feeling she had now.

She looked out again. The moon was brighter and not so large. It looked more natural, just the moon, normal and beautiful. She wondered if it had reached as far as the ocean and was shining upon it. Things were so still she could hear the waves quite distinctly, aimlessly, pounding the shore. Her mind flew to the little drowned girl in the blue dress that these same waves had toyed with in the same aimless manner. That was the day she met him. . . . Her mind went again to the little drowned girl, and suddenly she saw herself in the little girl's place being toyed with aimlessly as she had been. She would look larger, though, more awkward, quite clumsy, in fact, and she was overtaken with a sense of horror at the idea of his seeing her thus and being amused. That was all—he would be amused. . . .

And yet the ocean drew her, the ocean with the moon shining upon it opposite the spot where she had seen him first and, as she now recalled, doubted him. Even with her first glimpse of him distrust of him was born. . . . She told herself she was right. . . .

She wondered finally what time it was, and got up to look at a little jeweled clock that she had put out on the dresser. Two o'clock! She had not thought it was so late. Well, what of it? What difference did time make? . . .

The room was hot, and she was tired. Ah! how tired she was! And she brushed her hair back from her brow. Never mind the hour, she would steal out and go there to the beach and stand there and—yes, maybe she might, after all—just throw herself into the ocean, or, she thought, she might ask God what she should do.

She put a wrap about her and went down.

The rotunda was perfectly empty now, and dimly lit. She had never seen it quite like this, and felt a bit bewildered and uncertain—a little afraid to go out. She saw that the doors to the entrance proper were closed, and decided upon a rear one that she knew was left open all night.

On her way to this door, which was at the extreme other end of the hotel, she had to pass the grill-room. She noticed, as she reached it, that it was also but dimly lit. Still there were some lights burning and beneath one, in a

corner, a couple was seated. They were the only ones. As to who these two were it did not take her ten seconds to discover. . . . He was one! His fingers were about a wine bottle that he had rested on the edge of the table while he bent forward and talked to his companion. . . . His companion was the dancer. She was still wearing the red and yellow costume and the gold tassel was still dangling over her left ear.

It was the woman she studied, the woman with her bosom, according to Madge's estimate, so indecently exposed, whose eyes burned and whose oversized jewels shot forth flames. How evil she looked—good God, how evil! But why not? . . . What a power an evil woman like that could wield! She cursed herself and all that was good in her, good and stupid, stupid since it had not held him. . . .

He was pouring wine in the woman's glass now. The gesture, the manner of his bending forward, his form in the sleek evening coat, and the movement of his arm, sent thrills through her. She was afraid of herself, afraid she would scream or stagger over to him—she did not know what she might not do, so she turned and fled, as one pursued, to her room. . . .

For a moment she stood in the centre of it, white and breathless. And then still as one pursued and who must flee quickly she commenced to pack. . . .

At seven in the morning she was on the train. . . .

XIV

THE December sunlight streamed through the windows of the dining-room that had always seemed to Madge so ponderous and massive.

It was in reality a very beautiful dining-room. All that it had needed was plenty of freshly cut flowers on the table. These had been supplied from the new conservatory that her husband had added since his return. He had made flying trips about this conservatory, which, he told Madge, he intended should eclipse any in Europe.

They were at table, awaiting the serving of breakfast. Madge wasn't by any means the robust woman her husband had left when he started for Europe, but she was very lovely in a pale lavender negligée which the white roses on the table brought out beautifully.

Her husband was reading the paper. Suddenly an exclamation broke from him.

"Ye gods!" he exclaimed.

"What?" inquired Madge sharply.

"Cyril Fenwick has been shot by a woman—some dancer, who killed herself afterwards!"

"Cyril Fenwick?" asked Madge, white to her lips.

"Yes, I knew him slightly, had met him once or twice in a business way—at the club, too—a handsome, brilliant fellow who, between amassing millions, played fast and loose with women!"

"Is he dead?" asked Madge, almost in a whisper, her excited, feverish eyes on the paper.

"Yes, killed instantly!" He glanced at the paper. "Was tracked to some hotel in Chicago—but what's the matter with *you?* You're as white as a sheet!"

"Recently," answered Madge through quivering lips, "the least thing upsets me. When I've had my coffee," she added, bravely, "I'll be all right."

The servant entered with the service at this moment, and the next Madge was pouring the coffee for them both.

The sun had touched one corner of the white cloth so that it shone like snow. . . . The perfume of the white roses blended with the fragrant aroma of delicious coffee. . . . At the extreme other end of the conservatory a canary bird was singing triumphantly. . . . The bird was a recent purchase.

"He's a fine singer, isn't he?" asked her husband as he glanced through the open doors of the conservatory.

"He is," answered Madge faintly, "very!"

And all over New York people were breakfasting and commenting idly upon tragedies and trifles, more especially upon what a glorious morning it was. . . .

MYSTERY

By Marion L. Bloom

MY husband does not understand me. He is a good husband, as husbands go, but there are times when I almost hate him for his lack of perception and finesse.

I have tried to transport him into the realms of my rose-clouded dreams, or down to the gray depths of my sorrows; with untiring patience I have sought to help him cross that void of comprehension between the sexes; and all to no end.

If, in my fever of groping, I improvise soft, sad music, thinking thus to express what cannot be put into words, he sleeps peacefully.

The poetry I read is chanted in a weird, yearning voice, but conveys nothing to him of my frantic desire to be understood.

In the faces of men I meet, I seek in vain for that tender responsive sympathy, but it comes not, and I wonder if I am so wholly different from other women.

Am I never to be understood?

Yet—what the dickens is it that I *want* understood?

THE BROKEN TOY

By Elsie McCormick

THE pretty little lady cried quite hard when they took him away.
She had broken his heart.
And now she had nothing left to play with.

TREAT a woman as your inferior and she'll give you credit for wisdom; treat her as your equal, she'll endure you; treat her as your superior and she'll despise you.

WOMEN rarely marry the man they want—for the reason that they are already married to someone else.

THE SINS OF THE FOUR HUNDRED

By —— ——

IV.

THE ORGIES OF SOCIETY

THE orgies of Society are being carried to a greater extent than ever before in the history of Society. At the beginning of the war there was a general hue and cry of economy. People did a good deal of talking and made a tremendous pretense of cutting down expenses; to skimp became quite the fad of the hour. Anyone in the habit of following the newspaper accounts of social affairs must have noticed at this time a decrease of entertainment as listed for the public benefit. Society columns obviously shrank to very small proportions.

"The little money we can spare we are giving to Charity—sending over the water," said Society.

"Very commendable," pronounced the world at large. "Our upper class is coming to the fore at last."

I think it fairly possible that Society was quite sincere at first in its resolution to retrench in expenditures on entertainment. But dissipation has long since become such a necessary part of the lives of these people that to cut it out suddenly and entirely was found to be a sheer impossibility. So began a series of orgies, that gained a new tang from the fact that they were being conducted behind closed doors. Reporters were carefully excluded, the servants bribed to secrecy and Society ran rampant as before.

Later, with a top market, things resumed their normal attitude. The ban of secrecy was lifted and our Society items once more play a leading part in all the newspapers.

Now it is of exactly this hold that dissipation has on our upper classes that I want to speak. Professor James tells us we can form a habit in twenty minutes. Small wonder, then, that these people who from childhood are initiated into a series of lavish parties should find themselves at an early age completely in the thrall of dissipation. The excitement of the thing gets them and very soon rises to a fever heat that drives them on recklessly from one thing to another until nothing but excess satisfies.

The average party as it exists in Society qualifies as an orgy. Take any one of the big affairs that occur night after night in any one of our well-known summer resorts. Preparations are carried out on a mammoth scale. The most impossible things are brought within the range of possibility by a big bank account. If a ballroom should be found inadequate to the number of guests invited, an army of workmen can be employed to erect a new one over night or else to knock out the side of the house and extend the old one. Oftentimes most elaborate places are erected on the lawn, the beach or in a pine grove, and then demolished as soon as the occasions that called them forth are over.

The decorations are usually superb. The best the florists in the country can offer is made use of, and often special plants and shrubs are brought from

South America to deck a ballroom for a night. Birds of brilliant plumage were used at one affair in Bar Harbor last summer, and thousands of wonderful butterflies were let loose in some ingenious way or other on another occasion. The butterflies were all dead within an hour, but the effect desired—that of something different—had been accomplished.

The electrical and water displays cost thousands and thousands of dollars. No expense is spared in any line, and marvelous and brilliant effects are the result. The best-known scenic artists in the country are employed to create atmosphere. One ball last summer in Bar Harbor represented a Philippine village. Thatched cottages sprang up over night; natives of the Islands were found somewhere and herded together for the occasion. The music and supper were in line. Not a detail necessary to bring out the realism of the scene was omitted.

And yet again, at a brilliant Chinese ball given in Newport, one of the drops alone was estimated to have cost five thousand dollars. The Chinese costumes and jewelry of the guests must easily have run to the four or five hundred thousand mark. Egyptian, Russian, gold balls! They follow each other in such quick succession that no one affair has a chance to stand out more clearly than any other.

But in spite of the vast variety of settings the parties of Society are all fundamentally the same. They resolve themselves in the last analysis into drunken revels. Given an excess of liquor, the most suggestive of modern music, and a people untrammelled to a considerable degree by notions of law and order, and there can be but one result. Drunkenness has long been looked upon as a necessary part of any big affair, and discreetly trained servants are always on hand to take over the delinquents after they have become properly unconscious. At one big dinner I remember two years ago, the hostess proved the first one to be dispensed with.

Another little scene at that same party stands out clear and distinct in my mind. A man, a hanger-on in Society, was crawling on his hands and knees up the big staircase in the hall. A bottle of champagne protruded from one of his trousers pockets. At the head of the stairs were four or five youths equally drunk and wildly hilarious. As the man laboriously dragged himself to the top step he was promptly kicked down the whole flight again, to the delight of the onlookers.

And again, I remember at a party given at one of the big farms on Long Island a number of us, gay with alcohol, achieved the brilliant idea of jumping off the piano. We evolved a sort of game out of the performance with much silly success and hilarity, until someone accidentally jumped on the hostess!

At this same place there was given one Christmas night a party in the tanbark ring. We were all supposed to represent animals and to bring along, besides, some live stock or other. I tell you, we were a motley crew. The masqueraders and the animals all mixed up together made for perfect Bedlam. A red, white and blue pig and one mild-eyed cow painted a vivid purple stand out most clearly in my mind. And then there were doves and pigeons dyed impossible shades.

Jack Colbert was some sort of bird, and in a frenzy of desire to do the thing properly, attempted to fly off the balcony into the ring below. Poor Jack! His six feet two crumpled into an ugly little heap, and we were afraid to go near him. But it turned out to be only a sprained ankle! If he had been sober and a poor working man with ten children to support, unquestionably he would have been killed. For it was an ugly drop.

That same night we got to pushing one another into the swimming pool. It was great sport in the beginning, but in the end our enthusiasm carried us beyond bounds and a regular brawl ensued. Someone hit Billy Diehl over the head and then threw him into the

water. We were all too drunk to know what was happening. If a footman near by had not noticed Billy's failure to rise to the surface we might have all been guilty of manslaughter. As it was, a pulmotor had to be resorted to, but even that little incident failed to sober us.

II

But these things after all are trivial compared to the main issue of drunkenness—that of sex. Men and women who might otherwise lead fairly decent lives are brought by means of alcohol into mad enamourments that sometimes wreck their whole careers. A diminution in the use of liquor would bring about a corresponding diminution in the use of divorce court, I am perfectly sure.

At any affair one can see couples in various stages of infatuation scattered about the lawn, the conservatories, in any remote corner, in fact, where they can give themselves up to their absorption without interference.

A young matron well known in New York and Narragansett circles lost a very valuable necklace one night at a dance. The matter was duly bruited about in the newspapers and a conspicuous reward offered. The necklace was found in an old tumbledown bathhouse at the remote corner of the beach, at least half a mile from the club at which the dance had been given. The affair was promptly hushed up, and I believe the reward doubled. So at any big affair sex runs riot. The dressing rooms are apt to be scenes of disgusting obscenity, and before morning the lowest sort of ribaldry reigns. Usually the respectable element leaves early. The rest carry on their revels indefinitely. Breakfast is served about eight or nine in the morning, and then the people are tumbled into motors and sent home. Detachments of the men sometimes leave in the midst of things for cheap cabarets, to flirt and dance with the tawdry *habituées*. And what is far worse, these men occasionally return to the festivities later on and no questions are asked.

I remember one little incident that occurred at Magnolia some years ago. Dick Edgeworth was to be married to a popular divorcée. Her wealth was a matter of note; Dick owed everybody. There was a party the night before the wedding, and nine o'clock the next day found us all pretty thoroughly sodden with drink, Dick worst of all. I remember having a distinct notion in my mind that the wedding had to be put through at all costs. It was the culmination of a scheme on the part of Dick and the rest of us, a scheme that would put us all on easy footing.

And then at the last moment it looked as if the thing were going to pieces. We put Dick in hot water and steamed him; we put him in cold water; we hit him with ice bags till he was black and blue; we rode him up and down in a motor; but he remained hopelessly, limply unconscious through it all. The wedding was to be at twelve. At eleven I was delegated to break the news to the lady. I told her the stark truth. She took it calmly and immediately set about the preparations for the postponement. The next day saw the two, Dick and the lady, united in the very holy bonds of matrimony amid the smiles and congratulations of a few dear friends.

So much for affairs directly of Society. I want to speak now of those half-world parties that play such a large part in the lives of our wealthy men. Never before in the history of the United States has there been so much money stored up in one place as there is at the present time in New York City. The fortunes made in war stocks in the last two years have been gigantic. And never before in the history of this generation or the last has there been such a limited field in which to spend money.

Ordinarily the millionaire has Europe and the Orient—the world, in fact, as his playground, where he can squander his surplus vitality. But today, cut off from travel and foreign cities with

their variety of experiences, shut up in his own country—and with the wealthy man his own country usually spells New York—the millionaire is in desperate straits. He is a bit blasé so far as New York orgies are concerned, so what is he to do? Carry these orgies to an extent never reached before, and if he cannot attain a novelty of kind, at least he feels he can attain a novelty of degree. Hence, the scandalous excess of the affairs going on at the present moment.

The so-called "chorus girl parties" are really the least of these evils. There is a great deal of talk about them, but for the most part they are comparatively harmless, as a few of the rules that really count for decency are observed. Usually a party of this sort takes place in some private room at one of the well-known restaurants. The decorations and dinner are extravagantly the best to be had. Favors for the girls run about five hundred dollars and up. At one affair I recall the favors were gold mesh bags—listed at Tiffany's, I believe, at about five hundred and fifty dollars; and at another, ladies' gold cigarette cases with amethyst inset and blouse studs of pigeon-blood rubies.

The old idea of a hundred dollar bill under each plate is quite obsolete. The high cost of living is no myth, and a hundred dollars means very little to some of our present-day chorus girls. The prettiest girls on Broadway are usually culled for a dinner of this sort. The affair starts with a fair show of respectability and runs the gantlet through the various degrees of loose talk and jest to drunken ribaldry. There is usually a good deal of rough-house about the middle of the dinner. Brandied peach fights, tickling contests, a general drenching in champagne are apt to be found highly amusing at this stage. Later on, with the introduction of some sort of entertainment guaranteed to produce the proper effect, rough-house verges to an amorous imbecility that continues for the rest of the night. However, these chorus girls, duly impressed with the importance of their rich hosts, often affect a show of reserve—at least before each other.

And perhaps it is for the reason that, after all, there is a superficial veil of restraint, albeit slight, to these parties that they do not quite satisfy the wealthy man. Something crasser, more stark, is necessary as a goad to his jaded senses. The solution lies in the stag party—so called stag because only men are in on the first round. The very worst type of woman is introduced later.

Some years ago a well-known *cocotte* of London was served up at a dinner in a huge game pie. Our present-day menus still show a trace of this something *à la cocotte*. The incident created much gossip in the newspapers, but what was heresy yesterday becomes merely the banal today, and this sort of thing has been overworked to the point where it is now considered a bore. Nude women have been served up in Spanish omelets, *soufflés*, on oyster shells, in huge bowls of wine, and so on. A tank of women dressed as goldfish was the feature of one dinner not long ago and great sport ensued in the catching of them by means of nooses.

But the tendency of the present day is toward the bizarre. Oriental dancers, Hindoo snake charmers, and West Indian girls have been found to have a certain tang the white women lack. "Little Egypt," as she called herself, was probably the first of this kind.

At a dinner given in New York this Christmas Eve there were forty men present. Fourteen little colored girls from ten to fifteen years of age were turned loose to dance on the table toward the end of the dinner. The resulting orgy was unspeakably brutal. And this is but a sample of affairs of much the same kind that go on night after night for the amusement of the moneyed man.

Of course, the question comes up—where are these girls obtained? But most of the society men are on easy terms with the women who traffic in that sort of thing, and besides there are plenty of men in the same business

only too eager to get the patronage of wealth.

A well-known dancer, who had danced in most of New York's best restaurants was arrested for exactly this last summer at Narragansett Pier. He had agreed to furnish thirty girls for a stag party, but the authorities stepped in and took him to jail before he had fulfilled his contract. Some one else was found at the last minute, however, to supply the lack, so the party went merrily on and there was much laugh at the expense of the officials who had tried to interfere.

Money can surmount any difficulty. I pass over the obscenities introduced by way of entertainment at these parties. A sufficiently illuminating example of this sort of thing has been given due attention in one of our so-called society weeklies but recently.

III

I RECENTLY heard an interesting remark *à propos* of the present-day methods of spending money. A man who had just died was under discussion.

"He was a perfectly good chap," said someone, "and had loads of money, but when he died they found he'd spent it all."

"But, if he was a *good* chap," cut in someone else, "how under the heavens did he spend his money?"

So it goes. Revelry, debauchery, excess, these are the acknowledged ways of putting in use a large fortune.

I shall not give any more details of the orgies we have been discussing. They are rather too shocking. I think they are carried to a greater extent in New York City than any other place, although various yachting parties and week-end affairs in shooting lodges in the Adirondacks bid fair to outdo the city debauches. This is due, no doubt, to the fact of their longer duration and their extreme isolation. For there are no police laws and regulations on the deep and none to speak of in the heart of the mountains. The worst party I ever took part in was on a yacht. A week's drunken revelry with all it entailed, and I was forced to go to a sanitarium for a month to get myself in shape again.

There is another sort of orgy that should not be omitted—the sort that has been just recently exposed in the raid of a Thirty—th street so-called "studio." This "studio" sort of orgy—with its opium-smoking, et cetera—is only to be expected, I suppose, where the other kinds of dissipation have been pushed to banality. It is unfortunate there can not be a general raid of the private residences where this drug-using sort of thing has considerable sway.

Gambling is another thing that seems to be getting a stronger and stronger hold upon our upper classes. How much money has been lost in the various gambling houses that used to be so popular can be judged from the mammoth fortunes made by the men who ran those houses and from the almost regal splendor with which those places were kept up. I am speaking, of course, of the gaming place where a man has to be known and rated to play.

There is one place in particular that I have in mind, a place closed by the authorities a few years ago, where luxury ran rampant. I have never seen in any other place in this country or in Europe a finer collection of bronzes, marbles, pictures and rugs. Every detail of equipment was superb. And every night there was served, of course, to all the players a supper that would satisfy the most exacting epicure, with all the champagne that was called for. The general atmosphere of this place was that of entertainment by a most lavish host. There would gather here night after night practically the same crowd of men, all with the gaming fever in their blood, and the stakes would run higher as the night advanced. Recklessness begets recklessness, and millions of dollars would change hands in no time.

I know of one man who lost seven hundred thousand dollars in a few hours, and one of the biggest business blocks in Newport changed hands over

night. A well-known yacht that carried off a celebrated cup one year came suddenly into the possession of a man who couldn't possibly have collected money enough to buy it. And two famous race horses at Virginia Hot Springs changed owners very suddenly in a peculiar manner.

The gambling orgies of our millionaires rose to such heights a few years ago that the authorities deemed it wise to close down on the gaming houses. Everyone remembers the campaign, of course, and it seemed for a while as if the evil were being extirpated.

But, contrary to expectation, the closing of these houses has resulted in the spreading of the gambling evil in a most insidious manner. Instead of being localized, confined to a few centres, it has scattered and taken root in hundreds of places. There are probably many more gambling places in New York today than ever before. The places are fairly unpretentious but the evil is as far-reaching as ever it was in the days of the giant establishments. The raid of a small exclusive place has just taken place in the Fifties and one fairly conspicuous millionaire, I hear, is obliged to remain out of New York in order not to give evidence against the owner of the place.

This is but an echo of that earlier campaign where a number of young bloods were denied New York for similar reasons.

There are gambling places in New York City that cater to not more than six people, and it is at small places of this sort that the biggest fortunes are made and lost.

A girl I knew, an artist or something of the sort, a girl earning her own livelihood, told me once she had been broached several times in regard to the use of her place for some such purpose.

"Your studio is quite shut off from observation and there will never be more than five or six men," so the tempter had argued. It would have meant a fabulous amount for the girl and very little risk, for the patrons were of the wealthiest set in the city. This is a typical instance of the methods employed by men seeking to establish gaming clubs.

Many wealthy men's residences have of late practically become gambling houses. Poker, bridge, roulette (most private houses have their own wheels now) have full sway and night after night men gather and play till morning. Yachting and shooting parties are given with gambling as the main diversion. The fever gets these people and soon not the slightest thing in the world has interest for them unless a stake is involved. There was an eight thousand dollar golf game played in Newport last summer, and a fifteen thousand dollar tennis game. And so on—the tiniest incident of existence is made the main issue of large sums of money.

Take a chance—that's the life of the millionaire. His income is dependent for the most part upon chance. The stock market is as much a lottery as the roulette wheel. So it is only to be expected, I suppose, that the love of risk should dominate his whole life. It is but an accident of his existence. And with this love of risk there goes hand in hand that love of variety, that craving for something new that is the actuating force in all these orgies I have been talking about. But it is this striving after the unknown that will chance any risk that has characterized the biggest men in our country. So the motivating force of the best can be reduced to the same terms as that of the worst. If it is the motive that counts, then after all this righteous dissertation on orgies is said and done—what is there to condemn?

Excess has been the natural outgrowth of wealth ever since the world began, and it will no doubt continue to be so till the end of all time.

GHOSTS

By Kingsley Moses

"GHOSTS? Yes, of course I believe in them."

The Doctor tossed his dead cigar stump into the fire, and reached deliberately for a fresh Corona. He was acutely argumentative, the Doctor, and evidently wished to give us all plenty of time to open up on him.

In this he was disappointed.

Nobody spoke.

Finally, after undue deliberation in lighting the fresh cigar, the Doctor continued.

"You fellows are all sceptical, of course. But—well—I believe in ghosts. Yes, even in the reincarnation of disembodied spirits; their perception, at any rate by the mortal eye. Doubt me? Well, ask the manager of the King Charles Hotel. There are several other witnesses, too, but they are ladies and I doubt if they would wish mention in the affair."

I recall that I was on the verge of snorting my incredulity when our host's raised forefinger warned me of the danger of choking off a good story.

"To begin correctly"—the Doctor was ever deliberate and precise in his statements—"I should describe my friend Charon. An odd chap, at best; half Jew, half Hindu, I think, if such a hybrid be possible. I knew him first at college in freshman year. Lived here in New York, the son of well-to-do parents, and all that. But as forbidding a looking youngster even then as I have known. Black eyes, with a single eyebrow that ran straight across his forehead, a long beaked nose, and swarthy skin. Extremely quiet, too, and for that reason naturally not violently popular with the rest of us.

"Quite by chance, as the four years passed I came to know him better. Just how I don't know, for we had few things in common; but there was a peculiar attraction about the boy that drew me to him, although consciously repelled.

"Gradually, very gradually, we became friends; how I can't tell for the fellow was as unapproachable as a government official. But before junior year was over I had formed the habit of dropping into his rooms at least once a week, generally about ten o'clock in the evening. It was while there, one night in April, that he first showed me an illustration of his uncanny power: hypnotism? no, that's not the right term, 'magic,' I guess, is the only term that will answer.

"You have probably all heard of the trick. I had, but I'd never seen it worked.

"There were four of us sitting about the room, just lounging and smoking, waiting as usual until we got sleepy enough to go to bed.

"The room was brilliantly lighted, for Charon, despite his name, had no use for gloom. As he sat there at his desk, I remember, he fooled thoughtlessly with an ordinary desk ruler, a twelve-inch ruler such as you can buy in any stationery store for ten cents.

"Finally he stood the thing on its end and began to balance it between his hands.

"Then, very slowly, he took his hands away from it, and the ruler stood upright, balancing there on the pink desk blotter. By this time we were all watching. One of the fellows started to get up, but Charon stopped him with a sharp whisper.

"Then, as slowly as he had taken his

hands from the ruler, Charon began to raise them, his palms a foot apart, and each hand at least six inches from the ruler. And, believe it or not, *that ruler went right straight up in the air—and hung there!*

"About that time somebody exclaimed; and the ruler dropped back to the desk with a thump."

The Doctor paused considerately, awaiting objections.

But we were either a mighty gullible lot or we were too interested to interrupt.

"And what has that to do with ghosts?" the Doctor looked about with half-serious inquiry. "Just this: it suggested, almost ten years later, the famous ghost experiment.

"I hadn't run across Charon for ten years, more or less. You know how it is here in New York, you may know all about a person, keep in constant touch with him, in a way, and yet never see him from one year's end to the other. I knew that Charon was in some import business with his father, tea, I think; but I never met him face to face until last month in the lobby of the King Charles.

"I was taking tea there—I've said that no ladies' names were to be mentioned—and I ran squarely into Charon. With him was a stout, overdressed, highly ornamental female of about thirty-odd, the rather sticky type that is strong for emotions and French pastry. She gushed unnecessarily, and I classified her mentally as an overripe sentimentalist.

"I did my best to duck, but there was no escape. We were securely trapped, and rather than offend Charon by palpable rudeness we had to tea with them.

"Some of you at least know the tea room at that particular hotel. A dark, highly scented, boudoirish sort of place. I always feel rather surreptitious when I'm in there, as if I'd sneaked into a closet full of lingerie. It's so blamed intimate, everyone's talking intimate affairs, in an intimate tone, to his—or her—very *most* intimate friend. There isn't enough light to detect the spilled tea in your saucer, and you have to use your sense of taste to determine whether you're eating a crumpet or a muffin.

"And, by the time we had got ourselves all nicely settled on one of those low little wicker lounges, behind a low little wicker table, lighted by an electric candle, turned very low, I'll be hanged if the overripe lady hadn't begun to get intimate with me and to tell me all her sorrows. It is my business, of course, to listen to sorrows—though I usually get paid pretty well for the vicarious pain I am supposed to feel at the recitation—so I stood it as best I could.

"It appeared that the lady's Poppa—she said it that way—had lately passed into 'the Great Beyond,' 'crossed the eternal river,' etc.; and that she just could not get over it. The thought of never, never seeing him as he was on earth was too terrible, too harrowing, too—oh, much, much too everything. A determined reconnoitre for the inevitable handkerchief had begun, I knew.

"It was then that I had my inspiration. I hate tears, particularly the tears of that large, plump type of woman given to hysterics.

"'Bill,' I whispered, for in spite of his Stygian surname, Charon had been christened, or named, with a perfectly ordinary prefix, 'Bill, couldn't you materialize the spirit of your friend's father?'

"The lady was weeping now in earnest. Her emotions had quite overcome her frail nature.

"Bill was deeply moved.

"'I'll try,' he said.

"I shall not soon forget the next minute or so.

'To me, at least, the whole shadowed room seemed suddenly to have gone empty of human life.

"Only, through the gloom, lighted by a yellow ray of the tiny table lamp, Charon's face stared white, into nothingness. The sobbing woman and the girl I was with had vanished from my consciousness; the dark, soft-moving figures of the waiters seemed invisible, for all I am aware that they must have been there just the same.

"There was nothing, nothing in that grey-black void of room save the grim and ghastly face of the medium—magician—necromancer, call him what you will.

"And then, without sound, without odor, without sense of its presence, an opaque though smoky vapor sifted slowly into the far corner of the room. And —*the ghost of the dead man was revealed!*"

The Doctor is no amateur story-teller.

He had reached his climax; and he leaned back comfortably to let his tale settle into our minds.

Indifferently he tossed away his second cigar and selected another, clipping the end and lighting it with meticulous deliberation. He has a good poker temperament, the Doctor, and he pretended to be unconcerned as to whether we were interested or no.

I, however, knew there was more to come.

"What then?" I insisted.

"Oh," answered the Doctor, smiling, "then they called the police and arrested Bill on complaint of the manager of the hotel."

"What for? I didn't know it was illegal to materialize spirits; not illegal, that is, if you really could do it."

"Well, Bill *did* it right enough. Ask the manager. Did it so effectually that about twenty women had hysterics."

"But what was the charge; inciting a riot, creating a panic, what?"

"No, not that, exactly." And for the first time the Doctor grinned. "They did have some difficulty doping out the charge; but they finally accused Bill of promoting an indecent performance."

"What!"

"Exactly."

"But how?"

"Well, you see," and the hesitation was deliberately exasperating, "you see Bill forgot that while he could materialize the spirit of a departed *body, that* was the limit of his, or any other medium's, ability."

"I don't get you."

"No? *Well, you could scarcely have expected any medium to materialize the spirit of an old coat and pair of pants, could you?*"

"You don't—"

"Yes," concluded the Doctor, "poor Poppa didn't have a darned stitch on!"

THE FUTURISTIC RIVER

By Lucretia H. Burgan

(*After Leo Ornstein*)

GURGLA bubbla trickla rolla
Bumpla murmla tala dola
Smoothel slowthal soothal dothal
Shadla sunla ripla gothal.

THE duty of every man is to take a wife. Some men carry this principle altogether too far.

THE lessons of a man's youth become the temptations of his old age.

THE CITY

By James Shannon

1. Now it came to pass that the Senior God and the Junior God came on their annual tour of inspection to the Proudest City.

2. And they saw rich and arrogant men rolling in costly machines down the Proudest Avenue in all the World to spin their webs of gold in the canyons at the foot of the Island; they saw childless women, disdainful of soul, soft of body, wantonly squandering ill-gotten fortunes on laces and silks and baubles of precious stones; and they saw that vice and hypocrisy were rampant in the city and that its inner heart was cancrous with greed.

3. And the Senior God said: I will destroy this city, for its sin is become exceedingly great.

4. But the Junior God, who was young and optimistic, said: Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked?

5. If there be one just man in the city, shall he perish withal? and wilt thou not spare the place for the sake of the one just man, if he be therein?

6. And the Senior God said to him: If I find in the city one just man, I will spare the whole city for his sake.

7. And the two gods sought for a just man, and they found him not, neither in the Street of the Million Blazing candles, nor in the Square of the Picture-makers, nor in the squalid byways of the poor.

8. And in the early morning, in the white light that precedes the dawn, when they stood before a great structure from the closed doors of which extended a line of silent men even as far as the next street,

9. The Senior God said: Behold, all day and all night have we sought for one just man and found him not. Shall I not destroy this city, for it is an abomination?

10. But the Junior God, being three eons younger, said: Wait! the line that you see winding down the street is composed of men desirous of hearing a great opera, a thing of truth and beauty. They have been standing there all night. Some there must be among them whose existence will justify the city. I will try once again, that future generations will testify to our justice.

11. And the Junior God, accosting a pale youth who stood last but one in the line, said: Why standeth thou here, when thou mightest be home with thy family? Do you seek the True and the Beautiful? Do you seek the light of wisdom, the purification of souls, in this thing of eternal beauty?

12. The pale youth answered, saying: Where d'ye get that stuff, friend? I wouldn't sit through this show for a million. *I'm a ticket speculator!*

13. And the Senior God rained upon the city brimstone and fire from heaven.

14. And he destroyed the city, and all things about, all the inhabitants of the city, and all things that spring from the earth.

THE RHINE MAIDEN

By Stanley Northwood

I

THOSE who flattered themselves on the application of diplomacy to their social conversation and were anxious to stand well in the sight of the heir to the Eldew millions, usually sought for a subject that would be congenial to this debonair young man.

They understood that in no subject did he take the vivid interest that the mention of swimming feats brought to his mind. And when he was as short in his answers as one may be and still maintain a reputation for good breeding, they put it down to modesty and spoke with warm commendation of this rare quality.

When his sisters wanted to tease him they called him "Leander." But it is safe to say that not a half dozen of his intimates knew the reason.

It had to do with an incident now some six years passed by and encountered in that period when, at his father's command, he pursued Learning. It was his habit, however, never to tread on Learning's heels, but keep that discreet distance behind her which betokened respect. And it was one of his sincerest regrets that this attitude was too subtle for pedagogues to apprehend. At New Haven, for instance, where he was first entrusted with a latchkey and all the night hours, there was an impression that his example was not a good one to flaunt before less wealthy and sophisticated students.

Oxford, too, failed to be moved from her medieval dreams to welcome his ways of study. Graham Eldew felt that the vice-chancellor took an unfair advantage of him by quoting largely from classic sources which were unfamiliar to him. The interview ended amicably enough, but the American slept that night at the Savoy instead of his college.

His father was intensely annoyed. That fact that Swinburne and Shelley also had trouble with their college authorities, as Graham pointed out, in no way consoled him.

"They were socialists," Eldew growled, "and it served 'em right. What the devil is to be done with you now?"

"I should like to go round the world in your yacht," his heir suggested urbanely. "I know three very decent men who'd go, too. Valonstair, who was 'sent down' from Oxford with me, has a passionate desire to learn the ukalele in its native lair. I should go from a literary point of view," he added hastily as he saw his father frown at the mention of a gay young peer who had aided his son in time-wasting, "I should make a pilgrimage to Stevenson's home at Vailma."

"You'll make a pilgrimage to another seat of learning," his father said decisively.

"Then let it be Paris," Graham entreated. "I think I should do well there."

Mr. Eldew was against it mainly on moral grounds. He was still obsessed by the notion that the French were an immoral people. He did not know that in France the bourgeois virtues are most firmly rooted, and that the people themselves deeply deplore that foreign element which cultivates wickedness with such small success. It is one thing to aim at the glamour of badness

and quite another to be satisfied with *vin maigre* and free love.

So it came about that Graham Eldew was sent, instead, to Bonn. He spoke German less well than the other tongues he had easily mastered for the reason that he had never yet had a love affair with a German girl; and one only knows a language and its *nuances* when one can make love in it with tender facility.

His tutors at Oxford were very ready to give him letters of introduction to their eminent confreres at Bonn. One was to a Professor Blindenwesens, author of that justly famous *Elemente der Phonetik des Deutschen und Englischen.*

Graham Eldew called on him without misgivings. He was the sort of youth whose conduct might arouse criticism—but his manners, never. He had called upon Oxford professors, drunk their whisky-and-sodas and smoked their cigarettes. He felt a genial regard for their caste and even at New Haven numbered scholars among those who liked him. He rather expected to find steins of Munich beer and perhaps a pipe of enormous capacity.

He found instead an immensely learned man, large of girth, and possessed of a large red beard flecked with white. The eyes that glared at him were of very bellicose blue. Professor Blindenwesens hated Yale, her faculty and alumni, for the reason of a caustic review of his book by a distinguished Yale scholar.

In Graham Eldew he saw a representative of New Haven.

Eldew gave the professor his most distinguished attention.

"Well, sir," he said at length when the other's wrath was spent, "I'll read your book myself and give you an honest opinion."

Thereupon the professor launched into an attack on education in the United States and asked, later, what defence Eldew could make, and whether he dare compare Bonn and Yale.

"Why, no, sir," said Eldew: "It would not be fair to Bonn. We are a seventeenth century foundation, while you are only of the nineteenth."

With that he made his exit, hoping never to encounter the Blindenwesens again. He was not to know that the phoneticist would be the one to start him afresh on the wearisome quest for educational attainments.

A week later he was invited by an American lady living in Bonn to a lawn-party in the grounds of one of those charming houses in the Coblentzerstrasse whose gardens reach down to the Rhine. There were many pretty girls there, German and American; but as one gravely concerned over linguistic deficiencies, he determined to give his attention to the native maid.

From Lord Valonstair, whose father had been British Ambassador in Berlin, he had learned that German girls still clung to the sentimental love affair and were charmed to have Schiller quoted in their praise. Valonstair was one to whom men of his age listened with respect.

"Incurable romanticism distinguishes them," he had said, and proceeded to dissect the hearts of the maidens of continental Europe in a manner that would have shocked his father immeasurably.

"Of course," he had said when the post mortem was concluded, "there *are* German women who are hyper-sophisticated. I remember once at Stuttgart—"

Then followed the excursions into the fields of feminine psychology which it was not wise to pen.

There was one girl whom Eldew noticed directly he had shaken hands with his hostess. She had a glorious complexion, large and lustrous eyes and stared at him with an expression that betokened chaste interest. A lieutenant of infantry was telling her that he needed no sugar in his tea if she would only condescend to glance in his cup. He had already told her his other well-worn compliment—that she looked as if she had been poured into her dress. It was never so well received as its com-

panion because he did not, in its application, make allowance for the inevitable changes in fashion.

Eldew was certain the lady was bored. He was also certain that those eyes had smiled at him. A little timidly, perhaps, but with a certain *soupçon* of encouragement.

His hostess was surrounded four deep and he awaited impatiently the moment when he could ask her to introduce him to the pretty girl. Meanwhile the lieutenant, by the dashing stratagem of a second cup of tea, was able to use his stock compliment again.

Graham Eldew had never found himself forced to wait for what he wanted; and all barriers vexed him.

He walked to the girl's side and raised his hat and looked at her in a manner which he hoped expressed sentiment.

"I have been seeking you for an hour," he said.

The lieutenant clicked his heels together a little angrily. He did not like to be interrupted when he was considering the prospect of a third cup of tea; but he could not gainsay the stranger's courteous bearing. Also he was a little pleased to be called captain.

But when he beheld the two disappearing, arm-in-arm down a leafy path that led to the river, he felt things were not as they should be. But then, he told himself, Bonn was full of Americans and God only could understand the code by which they governed their conduct.

"I don't know you," the lady exclaimed when she was out of the lieutenant's hearing. But she did not withdraw her arm.

"That doesn't matter in the least," he told her. "I don't know you, but when I saw you being bored by that funny little soldier I knew it was my duty to rescue you."

"How do you know I was bored?" she returned.

"Because you were looking at me and wondering if I were nice."

"You must be very conceited," she laughed.

"I am," he said. "I have a right to be. Here I am arm-in-arm with the prettiest woman in all Bonn."

"And are you nice?" she demanded.

She had such an innocent way of looking at him that he decided she was one of the hyper-sophisticated German women of whom Valonstair had spoken. It had been his experience that mild and pious maidens often assumed an air of *diablerie* whereas the other kind often fell back upon the character of simplicity until its purpose was served.

"I should like to prove it to you," he returned, and squeezed her plump arm a trifle. He knew, in that moment, that in a decade she would be fat. But in ten years' time it would be the arm of another he would be squeezing. Why bother with tomorrow if today be fair?

She glanced at him with a quick look of bewitching shyness that must, he felt instinctively, reveal the highest art.

"What would people think of me for talking to someone whose name I don't even know?"

"Happiness can only be achieved when one cares nothing for what other people think," he assured her. "I have cared nothing for what other people think since I was eight years old."

"That is not the way to make me trust you," she answered, and looked apprehensively over her shoulder at other guests passing by.

She began feverishly to talk of Beethoven, his statue in the Muntzer-platz, and other topics of local interest.

"All that you say of the Master is true," he conceded, "and I will explore the old *platz* at my leisure, but this is too important an occasion to waste in guide-book discussions. Can't you understand that you and I were created just for this meeting?"

She blushed and murmured that Americans were startling. To herself she admitted that this debonair stranger was handsomer than any man she had met for a year. That he made such rapid progress in flirtation was only what she might have expected from a

man of his race. But, after all, she was hedged about with convention.

"Here is a convenient arbor," he said, drawing her into a cosy retreat, "I should like to ask you more about Beethoven."

"You admire him so much?" she asked.

"Enormously," he asserted. "But if that great man were living today I would not change places with him. He was blind and could not have seen you."

"Is it so much, then, just to see me?" she asked softly.

"I'm going to tell the truth," he said earnestly, "a thing I haven't done for years. It means a great deal more than you can think. I wonder how many spick and span officers have said they loved you? I'd bet anything that the officer you were with just now was telling you that."

"He had no right," she said slowly, "to tell me that."

"And what stood in the way?" he asked.

"Marriage," she made answer.

So she was married! And of course she was hyper-sophisticated. He thought of Lord Valonstair's adventure with the lady in Stuttgart. He saw that she looked rather anxiously at the people who passed. There was probably a jealous husband to be considered. Eldew was at an age when jealous husbands amused him.

"You must be introduced to me properly," she said suddenly rising. "After that I may be able to let you convince me you are nice."

II

His hostess, Mrs. Southard, was very ready to oblige him. She only hoped it was someone she knew and not someone brought by a friend. Since she was only recently come to Bonn and desired to be known as a successful hostess, she had extended many "blanket" invitations to those she knew and could trust to bring the right sort of people.

"You mean that pretty girl in white?" she cried as the desired one passed by. "I think I remember her. Her name is Blindenwesens. There's a very learned professor—"

"I know the bird well!" he exclaimed. "I have read his celebrated work three times. Dear Mrs. Southard, head her off before that lieutenant gets her."

Mrs. Southard did as she was asked, and Graham Eldew was presented as the only hope of a great American financier.

"Now," he said, when Mrs. Southard had turned to greet someone else, "you can be seen with me and still keep your reputation. I am not as strong as I look and my physicians have prescribed rest. That arbor where we were discussing Beethoven and love would be like a tonic to me."

"But we were not discussing love," she objected.

"Then we will," he said cheerfully. "There is no other subject worth discussing. Everything else is a mere subterfuge, as you ought to know."

"Why should I?" she asked.

"Because you are young and beautiful—and because," he drew his bow at a venture, "you are unhappy."

"Who has told you that?" she asked in surprise.

"Your eyes tell me," he said. "One can never love a woman truly unless there is a little sadness in her eyes. Your eyes tell me you have suffered."

She sighed.

Watching her, he seemed to see her comparing him with the erudite Blindenwesens. In the pursuit of learning he had discovered that lovely woman cannot be bound to her lord by ties of respect alone. Blindenwesens was, so the Oxford professor asserted, the greatest authority in the world on his subject. Oxford had conferred a doctorate upon him for no other reason. Blindenwesens in his zeal for his life-work was no doubt neglecting the little attentions such a woman as this demanded. Eldew had a theory that no woman could be really happy who was compelled by the laws of marriage to pillow her head against a large and bushy beard.

Many women had told Graham Eldew that he was as handsome as a Greek god. After a study of ancient sculpture he was not sure this was a compliment; but at any rate Praxiteles and Phidias did not endow their heroes with beards. Man to man, he outclassed Blindenwesens, and he was sure this delightful woman was ready to admit it.

"How can you see what so few guess?" she asked softly.

"Because I love you," he said promptly.

"How does love commence?" she whispered.

"Like this," he said tenderly, and put his arms about her and kissed her full on the lips.

His experience told him that she was the kind of woman who shuts her eyes when she is kissed—as though it were too sacred to look in the face.

When he had kissed her again she drew away from him.

"You ought not to have done that," she said slowly. "Here I have known you only an hour, and you kiss me how many times I do not know."

"This will make the seventh," he said.

There was an enormous satisfaction in kissing Blindenwesens' wife. The eminent scholar had been so unpardonably rude. The young man felt he was going to enjoy life in Bonn.

"You must not do that," she protested. "It shows you do not respect me."

"You are wrong," he said eagerly, and recalled a tag of Schiller's sentimental verse:

"'*All honor to women, they soften and leaven*
The cares of the world with the roses of Heaven.'"

"How beautiful!" she sighed. "How beautiful!"

Then she confided in him that it was a woman's highest ambition to fill some good man's life with heavenly roses.

"Wouldn't it be more fun to scatter roses in the life of a man who wasn't *really* good?" he asked. "You know, I'm not claiming goodness in any marked degree."

"The man one loves is always good," she murmured.

His heart beat quicker.

He found he was not sufficiently sophisticated to flirt without believing in something of what he said.

She was beautiful and she looked at him with eyes that spoke of love. And she was Blindenwesens' wife!

"If you loved a man would you throw in your lot with his?"

"That is what love means," she said simply.

"You'd risk the breaking up of your home?"

"If you knew how weary I am of it you would not ask. The eternal repression, the constant *surveillance*, the being ordered here and there as if one were a child—all this has poisoned my life."

It was Eldew's belief in those days that another was free to take a wife from the husband who failed to hold her. This adorable woman was kept down by Blindenwesens. He looked like the dominant male who would punish a wife who dared to speak her mind. Very well, then, he would take her away. Marriage was no part of his scheme of life, and this adventure need not be concluded with matrimony. The future was all very vague in his mind. His father would be annoyed no doubt for a time, but things would readjust themselves.

"I am going to take you away," he said masterfully. "Poor child, you haven't had the chance to live. I am rich and can give you everything you want. Will you come?"

Her soft arms were about his neck and the warm lips sought his with ardor. Even the sound of approaching steps had no power to frighten her now. It was the voice that boomed out in the offing that startled them both.

It was the redoubtable Blindenwesens! And the voice that answered him was that of their common hostess.

"He has read my book three times, you say," the scholar was saying. "And

an American, too! None but myself and he have done that. Dear lady, I am anxious to embrace him."

Eldew strove to release himself. To run away with a wife may be a pleasant enough adventure, but to be caught in a leafy arbor with her arms about him would make explanations either too easy or too difficult. For the moment he could not decide which. With gentle firmness he disengaged himself and stood up to greet the newcomers.

Blindenwesens' disappointment when he beheld the representative of Yale was not to be kept back.

"This!" he cried. *"This* is the man who has read my book thrice. Madam, it is written in an idiom that would pass the comprehension of such as he. I do not like such jests as these. And I had thought to meet a scholar!"

Then his glance fell upon the other occupant of the arbor.

"And what do you do here?" he demanded.

She threw her arms about Eldew's neck.

"We love each other," she said.

"It's unfortunate," Eldew said, with what dignity he could muster, "but it's true. These things happen."

He put his arm about her with a gesture that he felt was rather noble.

Blindenwesens turned to Mrs. Southard.

"This is the sole heir, then, of the great financier?"

"He'll be incredibly rich," the lady assured him. "One of our best families, too."

Blindenwesens assumed a less bellicose aspect.

Almost one could see benevolence peering through the thick lens of his glasses.

The girl saw it, too, and ventured to smile.

"Dear, dear father," she said softly.

"Father?" Eldew exclaimed. "This is *your father?"*

Blindenwesens did not hear. He was congratulating himself. His daughter had showed many decided preferences for men since she left her school, but most of them had been for men he considered undesirable from a financial point of view.

And now all difficulties were at an end. She was to marry a millionaire. He thought he would make his residence in America, too. Harvard had already made overtures to him.

"I'm afraid there's been some mistake," Eldew said in a staccato fashion. "I didn't know she was your *daughter."*

"What?" the professor roared angrily. "You have been deceiving her?"

The girl stared at him in perplexity.

It was the most dreadful moment Eldew had experienced. He was sorry and not unashamed.

But Blindenwesens as a vengeful husband and Blindenwesens as an overwhelming father-in-law were quite different beings. And matrimony were a tame ending to the adventure he had planned.

The professor advanced toward him with a dreadful calmness. There was no doubt he was a man of tremendous physical strength. He was clenching vast fists.

Eldew retreated as calmly as he could. A fight was out of the question. Eldew had as little justification for violence as he had appetite for public chastisement.

"This can be explained," he said, with a show of ease. "If Mrs. Southard will only listen for a moment."

Mrs. Southard looked reproachfully at him and made no effort to stay the course of the enraged parent. The daughter wept silently. In the distance Eldew could see guests coming toward them.

It was then that he saw, only a few yards distant, gleaming in the newly-come moonlight, the placid Rhine on her journey to the sea. It was his path to safety. The cry of the balked father was the last thing he heard as he dived beneath the water.

* * *

It is not difficult to understand why Eldew did not take his Ph.D. at Bonn—or why a reference to Leander is distasteful.

EATERS OF THE APPLE

By P F. Hervey

I

THOMAS HIGHLEY had dined there often before, and he thought it odd that he had never correctly understood things till this evening.

He was a small, gentle, smiling man with vague blue eyes. That afternoon, gazing out of his quiet office across the roofs of the tired, chaotic city, he had thought with a pleasurable melancholy of the days when he was a boy in the country. Into his mind crept bright pictures of the winters when the smoke came up from the still farmhouse in kindly spirals, and the rolling sweep of countryside was white and silent and lovely, with here and there a clump of thin pines holding up snow-laden hands.

Carried abruptly back to the casual present, he tried to estimate what he had come to, where he had lost, and where he had gained. Marriage and the persistent struggle for existence had always focused his attention, and now when both problems had been at least comfortably solved, he began to wonder whether his aim had been very worth while after all.

Henrietta, his wife, was small like himself, but her sharp grey eyes smote all further resemblance to earth. She had no children, and she had adopted a church instead. Her passionate acceptance of its duties, her earnest devotion to its interests, made Thomas feel a little sinful.

That evening was Tuesday, and every Tuesday for years beyond memory, the Highleys had dined with James and Fanny Gates.

Thomas didn't really like James Gates, but he accorded him that respect which a mild man always accords a stern one. Gates had a tall, angular body and a face with high cheek-bones and a rigid mouth. He conducted his wholesale apple business with a kind of grim, religious intensity. He was, indeed, in many ways like Henrietta. Each lacked a sense of beauty and a sense of humor, and each attempted to balance the lack by a hyperbolic sense of morality.

"I am putting a new apple on the market," said Gates pompously at the table, "and I am at a loss to find a name for it."

He always talked in a hard, defiant voice at these dinners of his apples; and, when he was in one of his clean-cut silences, Henrietta Highley would orate concerning the details of her church work in a wordy monotone.

Fanny Gates and Thomas would sit quiet, eating daintily and timidly like two trained mice.

But this time Thomas ventured a remark.

"Why not call it 'The Apple of Knowledge'?" he suggested.

The simple flippancy won a varying reception. Henrietta drew in a righteous breath and tightened her lips as if to prevent it from escaping. Gates coughed his contempt and stared resolutely at the wall.

But Fanny looked up and smiled with what seemed a flicker of humorous understanding in her large, brown eyes.

It was the first time that Thomas had ever visualized Fanny as a personality. She was a plump, fresh-looking woman, who was generally content to thrust inanities between hard facts like wash-

ers between iron bolts. Thomas had always accepted her placidly and with his invariable courtesy, but he had never suspected that she possessed a soul, and surely had never tried to remember the shape of her nose! And now she became suddenly vivid and breathing to him.

His faint, regretful reminiscences of the afternoon returned. Quite suddenly he felt that everything was a mess. Life was a mess. Yes, it was! He had wished to be a buccaneer when he was a boy, but he had failed to become the politest sort of pirate. Worse, he had married one. And here across this stale table he sat, conquered by dull custom. He'd spent his energies in life thus far only in the conventional endeavor to forestall death.

He looked at Fanny, companionable, unresisting, gentle like himself, and he saw for the first time how much she must have in common with him.

That evening he talked to her after dinner in the slow, drawling tone he had never quite lost. He told her of what he had been thinking in the long afternoon, and she seemed sympathetic, seemed to understand so well his mood of tender retrospection.

"I've felt that way, too," she said, looking up to glance at her husband, who was listening with a condescending tilt of his head to one of Henrietta's fiery declamations; and to Thomas the words were magical and magnificent.

To think that she had felt that way, too! To think that she was so like himself! What a wonderful sentence! It was big with the poetry of spiritual communion.

"All this while I've never known you," he whispered. "I'm so glad I've discovered you now."

"I'm glad, too," she murmured, dropping her soft eyes.

She looked hardly thirty and quite pretty. Nature, that calm artificer whose duty it is to promote love, lends swift moments of beauty to those on whom she casts an interested eye.

II

In the two months that followed, months in which cold, windy days grew suddenly mellow with spring, Thomas saw her often. On Thursdays the Highleys played hosts in return to the Gateses. Those Tuesdays and Thursdays now seemed to Thomas the only instants of existence that were truly charming.

"A man is as young as often as he falls in love," a very fine writer has said, and Thomas was inclined to think that he had fallen in love.

But he did not permit this revelation to appear candidly in his talks with her, and no doubt it was their silent acceptance of a feeling that was mutual which rendered those talks so intimate.

A bond sprang up between them, a friendly, unspoken bond of common domination, such as galley-slaves might experience. They would glance at the engrossed James and Henrietta and smile secretly. Thomas was sure he didn't dislike Henrietta. Fifteen years of her was a habit which, he admitted, had its advantages. And Fanny never criticised James unkindly. Perhaps they felt rather as if they had been gripped by two traps, and that it was a little useless, a little undignified to attack the traps for a mechanical performance which they could not help.

Then one Saturday afternoon when spring was in full flood, and the dewy air trembled with elusive fervors, Thomas left his office and made his way uptown. His desire was to be near trees and green sod, and he strolled up Riverside Drive, breathing deeply those sweet airs, and swinging his stick with a light vigour.

With a little flutter of pleasure he beheld Fanny Gates seated alone on one of the benches.

"Fanny!" he said. "What fun! And you're alone?"

They strolled down the steps to the parkway to occupy a secluded bench in the lower reaches. Heavy bushes screened them from the rear, and in front of them the steel-coloured river

flashed back the afternoon sunlight.

"Did you feel like coming out alone?" he asked. "Just that wish to get away from things and people—except those who understand."

"Yes, I wanted the air and crowds of strangers. James came home early. There's some trouble about freightage or other, and he was irritable, and . . . Not that he hasn't reason to be."

"I know. I didn't want to go home directly myself. Henrietta is always full of the next day's sermon on Saturdays. She grows so excited! . . . Of course, though, I don't mind going to church with her once a week."

As his voice died away into silence, their hands slowly touched and clung. It was as if they were infants, sharers of a spirit of revolt, who had scrambled away from their respective nurseries. For a long while they were still.

At last Thomas said softly, as if he were under the spell of the murmurous afternoon:

"Do you know, Fanny, I think we've been cheated, you and I. We ought to have married each other, we're awfully alike. And we each could have done such splendid things. We've just missed them somehow . . ."

At that instant Thomas saw a tear in Fanny's eye. How was he to know that a tear appeared there at any provocation, that she invariably wept at weddings, and songs of yesteryear, at ill-used animals and hungry tramps? And again, how was she to know that Thomas had been trained to husbandry without the employment of tears, and, further, that he was particularly susceptible to them?

He leaned over her, caught her hand in a tighter grip.

"Oh, Fanny, Fanny," he whispered, "don't cry! I can't bear to see you miserable. I didn't know things were like this. . . Oh, Fanny, I—I love you."

He kissed her. His aim was not as sure as his affection. It was one of those fierce, impulsive kisses on the nose. But Fanny only crumpled her little handkerchief against her eyes and sobbed weakly:

"Oh, Thomas, I love you, too!"

Thomas scratched his chin with a thoughtful hand, even as he employed the other to gesticulate his passion. He had begun to live the gay, romantic, carefree life he had always pictured, and he wasn't quite sure that he liked it. He was a consistent man and he considered a declaration to a woman as a kind of spiritual contract.

Now that things had come to this pretty pass, now that the cold truth of their hot love was said and confirmed, he saw but a single course left him.

"Fanny," he murmured, "we've got to go away, we've got to take up life by ourselves. Henrietta is all right, and so is—is your husband. But they're not our mates. It was all a mistake. And we mustn't be old-fashioned and take things too seriously. I was reading a book by a fellow called Moore, and—"

"Oh, Thomas," she interrupted, with her eyes lighting up, "I've wanted to do this all my life, and I've never had a chance. All the plays I see and all the stories I read are about it. And every day in the newspapers somebody runs off, or is divorced, or something. They say that in unsuccessful marriages, most wives run away . . . but I've never had a chance! Oh, Thomas, do let's run away together!"

Thomas gazed at her with surprised eyes. This was not exactly his idea of the significance of their flight, nor was it his idea of the expression of a tumultuous love.

She seemed to think it was a kind of prank, something that could be remedied whenever one desired.

She was really quite like a child. He had always wanted to be paternal, and to smile tenderly at the foibles of a child-wife, but he suddenly realized, with a twinge, that he was thinking just now with admiration of Henrietta's contrasting practicality.

"Are you quite sure you love me?" he asked solemnly; but as he saw a new tear grow and tremble on her eyelash

he threw his hesitation to the winds. "Oh, my dearest, my darling! We'll go tonight. We'll go *now*. How cruel I am! How unkind! Fanny, Fanny, I'll never let you leave me."

III

THOMAS went home to pack a grip. He could not bear to tell Henrietta frankly, could not meet her sharp, self-righteous eyes and make his admission. In fact, he was afraid to do so.

Perhaps it would be better, he thought, to let the truth break itself to her. His business often called him out of town unexpectedly, and in this circumstance he found his excuse.

He told his lie with a guilty face, and then, very much like a small boy, shivered, whistled to keep up his pluck, and swaggered down to the waiting taxicab with a glum face.

Fanny met him at the station. She was smiling and rotund as ever, not at all a haggard Nora. He marvelled at her self-complacency and yet found, to his astonishment, that his amazement was mingled with a certain pity.

"James wasn't there when I got home," she said gleefully, "though the hall-boy said he was coming right back. So I left a note under his pillow saying I'd gone away with you. Was that right?"

"You surely haven't gone away with anyone else," answered Thomas with a dismal smile. He was worried about a detail of travel. "I—I've got to get the tickets," he began stammeringly, "and I—the berth—I—"

She turned her calm, soft gaze upon him.

"I don't mind sleeping in an upper berth," she said, "if that's what's troubling you. You can have the lower one. Some people always like them best, I know."

"Oh—ah—yes," said Thomas.

He turned hurriedly away to secure reservations and to purchase tickets. This was odd, for there was a great deal of time before them. Their train, indeed, did not leave until quite late.

They filled in the interim with dinner and the movies. Thomas did not enjoy the latter keenly. The feature-picture concerned the smasher of a peaceful home who came to a sinister end—the wrong end of a revolver.

But Fanny was in a glow.

"Wasn't it splendid?" she asked unfeelingly, as they filed out of the house and made their way to the station.

Thomas had decided to go to Washington. He had passed his honeymoon with Henrietta there, and he thought his hard-won knowledge of the Capital might serve this second occasion.

It seemed to him easiest to accept Fanny's solution of his stammers concerning sleeping-quarters.

As he crawled into his lower berth he wondered what she was thinking up there above him. Surely there must be some spirit of dread, at least of timidity, in her heart at the step that she was taking.

He tried hard to concentrate on the subject as if to force her to telepath her thoughts to him, but they came to him less subtly in the form of a regular snore . . . Henrietta *never* snored!

The morning was hideous.

In the hell of the washroom, pale and tired, Thomas contemplated his badly-shaven face. How on earth had he come to run away? Or rather, how on earth had he come to fall in love? He was ready to barter a million kisses for two poached eggs. The train was already in the Union Station, but they took breakfast on board.

In the early light Fanny looked thick and sleepy. She was plumper, too, in this unkind hour. Thomas always insisted on a huge breakfast—he was never tired of asserting that it was his "best meal"— that seemed as large in bulk as he was, but Fanny, with feminine inconsistency, appeared to eat hardly anything at all.

She stared at Thomas as if she resented his appetite, and blinked heavy eyes at him. Gazing at her critically, Thomas was compelled to admit the truth of the old statement that one

never knows one's fellows till one camps with them.

But—he was pledged to a definite course.

It was too late to draw back now. And no doubt things would shape out better later on.

Breakfast done, they took a taxi to the hotel they had selected.

"Thomas, this is wonderful," Fanny breathed, looking through the window. "I'm so glad I came!"

He pondered her simplicity.

Where on earth did the woman think they were? On a Cook's Tour?

Thomas was not aware that a grain of the cold rice he had just eaten lurked in a furtive crinkle of his coat. And coupled with that, his diffident, shame-faced manner, as he sneaked into the hotel behind the boy who carried his bags, really clears the reputation of its shrewd day-clerk. The latter smiled satirically, then grew grave as Thomas caught the look.

"Why is that man smiling like that?" querulously whispered Fanny in his ear.

"I'm afraid," said Thomas in a tone of meek apology, "I'm afraid he thinks we're just married."

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh! I—it's terrible!"

Advancing to the desk, Thomas mumbled a question.

"One room and bath, sir?" asked the clerk.

Before he could reply in the affirmative, Fanny interrupted:

"Indeed not! We want *two* rooms."

"Adjoining ones?"

"No, no! Not in the same part of the house!" continued Fanny irritably.

The clerk's eyebrows went up the fraction of an inch.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I thought you were married."

Thomas was standing by in speechless amazement.

Now that Fanny had so definitely taken the field he felt that he had to follow her maneuvers at any cost, and slay criticism. It was a pity that no more tactful relationship stepped into his confused head as he asserted:

"This—this lady is my *aunt!*"

The look that Fanny gave him as they stepped into the lift pointed out the enormity of his slip.

"Good Lord!" said Thomas to himself. "I believe she's going to cry again!"

He was heartily relieved when she got out at her floor and he was permitted to journey on alone.

They lunched together in a decorous stillness, but Thomas could not quite rid himself of a marked suspicion that everyone in the room was looking at them with the amused smile accorded to honeymooners. He had never suspected that vice would prove so embarrassing. . . . The afternoon, he hoped, would be better. No doubt Fanny was merely worried by the excitement of the happy adventure. She didn't trust him altogether yet. That was the explanation of the hotel-room affair. Oh, yes, things would come out very nicely before long.

He hired a hack, and with Fanny by his side pointed out the buildings they passed with the air of a proprietor. The coloured coachman seemed interested by his classifications, but Fanny was sunken in a somber reverie.

"Dearest," he asked her at last, with a genuine touch of tenderness, "what is on your mind?"

"I was only thinking," she murmured, "of how James used to bring me home the paper every night with that *Fourth Year of Married Life* serial in it. And he didn't like that newspaper either. He bought it . . . just for me." She sniffed.

"Great Scot!" thought Thomas, "she's going to cry again!"

But she didn't. She leaned forward instead, as they were passing the White House, and without a glance at it, whispered brokenly:

"Oh, Thomas, do take me away tomorrow. I can't stay in this place any more!"

"Yes, dear," he said in a soothing voice, though he was secretly enraged at his failure to entertain her. "I know

how you feel. We'll go away in the morning. There's a quiet little village in Delaware to which I used to go every summer long, long ago. We'll take an early train there."

The next morning Thomas groaned as he realized that his ears were ringing. His ears always rang when he was under any strain: they were very delicate. Henrietta used to drop medicince in them with wonderful precision and care. It were useless to ask Fanny to perform this practical and skillful labour. Over the picture of a life punctuated by perpetual earaches, Thomas groaned again.

They made a start before lunch, and early in the afternoon reached the little village of which Thomas had spoken. This sheltered a boarding-house or two, and he led Fanny directly to the first one recommended. After luncheon he suggested a stroll down by the water. They seated themselves on the river bank, and as she picked absently and sadly at a clump of daisies, Thomas tried to recapture something of the romantic mood in which he had embarked.

"This is fine after Washington," he said. "Just you and me out here alone in the country. Dearest, aren't you glad you came?" He bent one arm about her shoulder, and thrust his face forward to kiss her.

She moved expertly away. "Don't," she said. "It isn't right. It's—"

"Isn't right?" he stammered in perplexity. "What on earth do you mean, Fanny? And see here, isn't it time—that is—I mean, oughtn't we to act like—like man and wife?"

"Thomas Highley!"

She rose and stared down at him with a shocked face.

"So *this*," she went on, *"this* is your true nature! You mean—you—oh, why did I ever leave James?"

"Good Heavens!" thought Thomas, "she's going to cry again!"

She did, but she did it walking rapidly away from him in the direction of the boarding-house.

With a puzzled, silly smile distorting his face, Thomas rose and meekly followed her.

IV

THAT evening he sat alone in his room with a time-table before him. There was a local for New York that stopped at the little town in the vicinity of eleven, a train that did late night service at one end of its call and early morning duty at the other. He had decided to take it. Fanny? Fanny could do as she pleased. He was through. He'd bungled things terribly. He'd go straight to Henrietta and confess everything, ask her to take him back. But, of course, she knew everything already. James Gates had gotten Fanny's note, and perhaps the case was already in some lawyer's hands. Oh, horrible to consider! The scandal he could stand, but the thought of separation from Henrietta made him wince.

He shuddered over the mistaken impulse that had so completely wrecked his life.

He sat there brooding in an abstraction so deep that he almost missed his train.

Then he rushed for the stairs, deposited ample money on the nearest table for the landlady, and panted down the street.

He struggled into the station just as the train was preparing to pull out. He made a jump for the smoking-car, staggered in, and thumped down his bag with a sigh of relief.

Once again he thought of Fanny. How would she take his departure when she learned it in the morning? She'd cry, no doubt! Confound her! . . . Damn her!

All night long he lay sprawled upon his seat in the heat and reeking fumes of the car. He slept only in fitful, painful starts. At last the grey of dawn touched the dull sky, and he sat up feeling pallid and ill and miserable.

As the train shot through the tube into the Pennsylvania Station he arose and shook himself. His hands were grimy, his hair clotted, his eyes red.

On the platform he moved forward nervously.

Then, a little ahead of him, he saw a too familiar figure.

"Why— why, Fanny!" he cried in astonishment.

He was too tired to realize that she must have followed an impulse similar to his own; it seemed to him for a second that he was beholding a miracle.

Fanny Gates looked at him icily for a long moment. She was in hardly better plight than he, but though hauteur under a draggled hat is not easily simulated, she managed it. Her gaze passed on, remote, unseeing, over his shoulder.

She had cut him dead! . . .

It was a little later that Thomas burst into his apartment and surprised his wife at the breakfast table.

"Henrietta!" he cried in penitent agony, "oh, Henrietta!"

But there was no look of anger, or of contempt, in the sharp eyes of his competent wife. Could it be that she hadn't learned yet? Was it possible? He held his tongue and waited anxiously for a word of illumination. It came when he had explained his appearance with the excuse of a sleepless night.

"Wasn't that unfortunate about Mr. Gates?" she said.

Thomas felt the colour leave his face.

"W-what?" he stuttered.

"Oh, that's right, you went away the evening it happened. His Aunt Matilda died, and the telegram was delayed. He called me up just before he left to tell us not to come to dinner this Tuesday. Mrs. Gates happened to be out, and he had to catch a train and could only leave her a note of explanation. It was too bad he couldn't wait for her, but the train he took was the last one that would get him there in time."

In a flash of revelation Thomas saw Fanny entering her home, saw her reading that message, saw her drawing her own note from under the untouched pillow and carefully destroying it. He was saved!

"Too bad," he murmured disjointedly, as a queer smile crossed his white lips. "But I'm so glad to be with you again, Henrietta. I'm awfully fond of you, Henrietta. And, Henrietta, will you put some of those drops in my ear this morning?"

It was in this spirit, too, if not in this phrasing, that Fanny greeted James when he returned from Aunt Matilda's funeral.

But Thomas Highley, of late, when he finds himself listening to gossip of a smoking-room order, smiles slyly and significantly. And Fanny Gates, when she sees a play with infidelity for a theme, gives it the quiet inspection of one who knows. Have not they, too, been eaters of the apple of knowledge?

THE moment a woman admits that she is no longer young, a man may safely engage her in conversation without fear of compromise.

WHEN a man reaches such a maudlin condition that he publicly pays his wife compliments, it's time the party broke up.

WHEN a man calls you a liar, humor him. He may be right.

HEAVEN WILL PROTECT THE P.W.G.

By Harry H. Earnshaw

MY stenographer has pretty hair and well kept hands. She dresses neatly, and does not use cheap perfume. She is very efficient. I see a good deal of her—I mean, I see her a good deal. I think she likes me. Most women do. I am not one of those who are silly about things, the conventions—and all that sort of nonsense. You know what I mean. All women were made to be loved, all men to love them. And yet, somehow I feel different toward my stenographer. I have never even asked her to lunch. She is all alone in the world, dependent upon her position. Her position depends upon a nod of my head. It hardly would be fair to misuse the power which the accident of our relation has placed in my hands.

Besides, she has a face that would stop a runaway aeroplane.

I AM A COW-PUNCHER

By E. Douglas Johnson

I AM a cow-puncher.

The other night my cousin, whose father is worth a hundred sections of land and ten thousand head of cattle, invited me to meet the fiance her father is going to buy for her and attend a "dining." The fiance was nice; the dining was nice; everything was nice.

I am damn glad that I am a cow-puncher.

FINIS

By Louis B. Capron

SHE was a finished coquette
And he was as finished a flirt.
He practiced his art when they met—
She was a finished coquette.
They're viewing "apartments to let,"
For each was a bit too expert;
She is a finished coquette
And he is as finished a flirt.

THE DASTARDLY DEED

By Russell McCarthy

PARVIN smoked another cigarette. Viciously, then, he threw the half-burned thing into the fireplace, thrust his hands deeply into his pockets and strode across the room to the window.

He was betrayed.

One fact, he knew, was certain.

His betrayer was one of three men, one of the three with whom he had made merry, after his dignified fashion, but a week before. Could it be Simpkins, that supine fool who talked incessantly of Mrs. Simpkins? Could it be Laird, fat spoofer of a bachelor, without the wit of a burro? Or Burwin, melancholy brute, whom wine might yet lure to the ministry? Scoundrels all, of course, and Parvin knew that he had been an ass to take them into his confidence that unhappy night.

But Laird, daring certain interstate laws, had left the very night of the dinner for Maine. It could not have been Laird. Of the other two—but Parvin, staring out of the window, saw what made him burn inwardly until the sweat stood on his forehead. At his very door was *Simpkins,* and the lady he was handing out of the cab was Mrs. Parvin.

Starting forward angrily, brushing by his wife at the door, Parvin stopped the retreating Simpkins with an oath.

"Dismiss the cab," he muttered, "and come with me."

Simpkins' face showed his astonishment, but he acquiesced without a word, and a moment later the two were stalking wordlessly up the street.

Parvin's hands were clenched, and his lips were white and thin.

He glared at the other.

For the moment he could not speak.

They had gone a block when suddenly, still walking, he seized Simpkins by the shoulder and threw at him the question:

"How often have you seen my wife in the last week"

The fellow sputtered, but he thought, and mumbled,

"Three times, perhaps four."

One would have supposed, by Parvin's eyes, that he would kill his victim there on the highway. But slowly his clenched fist relaxed and his hand fell from the other's shoulder.

"I knew it," he said, as to himself, "I knew it."

Head down and walking listlessly, he said no more.

After many minutes they entered a small park, and with one accord sat upon a bench. Parvin, elbows on knees, dropped his head into his hands. Finally, weariness taking the place of his anger, he said, hopelessly:

"Well, tell me about it. I am beaten. You have done your worst. But I must know why you did it. Speak."

Simpkins hesitated. His earlier astonishment was not yet gone from his face, although it was evident that he was relieved at the change of mental attitude in his inquisitor.

"But there is nothing to tell," he said.

In a moment the old fire came back into the eyes of the husband of Mrs. Parvin.

"Damn you," he said, "you know what there is to tell. And you'll undo this thing you have done, or I'll wring your neck! You say you have talked with my wife four times in the past week, four times since that stag dinner you scoundrels lured me into. Was the

first time the day after the party."

"Yes," admitted the other, "it was. The next afternoon. I met her at—"

"No matter where you met her. The very first day! Ugh! I knew it. I could tell it that night. I knew at dinner that one of you wretches had betrayed me. And now I know that it was you. And you saw her again. And again. You poisoned her mind. Each day you poisoned her more. But you have me to reckon with."

At last the patience of the supine Simpkins was gone.

"Here, Parvin," he said, "you stop this foolishness and talk sense. What's all this raving about?"

"Asking me what it's about, you who have poisoned my wife's mind! But you have me to reckon with, I say. You shall go back to her, now. And tomorrow. And the next day. And you shall tell her that you lied. You shall make her *believe* that you lied. Do you hear me? You *must* tell her, and keep *on* telling her, that you lied. Make her believe it! No matter how. You, with your sneaking ways, have made her believe one thing. Now you shall prove to her the *opposite!* Do you understand?"

"I do not," said the other, firmly.

"Liar," roared Parvin. "But I will tell you. We shall have no misunderstanding in this matter. You remember that night when you scoundrels lured me into taking a glass or two more than I wanted, and I talked. I told you how I loved my wife. I thought I was talking to gentlemen. It was a confidence, and you knew it. But you, you cur, have betrayed me. A full day did not pass before you sought her out and whispered my admission into her ear. When she only half believed, you sought her again, and whispered again. You were not satisfied until the poison worked, and my home was ruined. I, who had been so happy, so confident, am a broken man. *Can a man live with a woman who thinks he loves her?* You fool. But you must reckon with me. And I say you shall return to her now, and tell her you lied. You shall see her tomorrow, and make her believe that you lied. Now, do you understand?"

But Simpkins, who at least understood the returning anger of the man he had wronged, was already hurrying away.

Parvin sat alone.

His face cleared a little, and he looked almost hopeful.

"The sneak," he muttered. "But he may succeed. He has a way with women."

REVENGE: IN MEMORY

By Charles Divine

FAR down the twilight-haunted way
Where ghosts and love-dreams intertwine,
Your arm in his, for all 'tis May.
Is not so close as heart of mine
Still throbbing from your lips that day
With one mad kiss like stolen wine.

IT is an ill wind that blows when no girls are on the street.

PALE HANDS THEY LOVED

By Hugh Halston Fitzgerald

WE had been talking of Youth with the reverent appreciation that only fifty years of experience can lend a man. In times past Dexter and I had trodden the magic groves together, ignorant then, alas, that the hours we flouted were of gold.

"If Youth makes a stumble," Dexter said presently, "he falls among friends. Eager hands pick up his hat and press it on his curly brow, and sympathizers hand him his jaunty cane and bid him on his way."

I saw clearly that Dexter was not generalizing so much as dwelling upon some specific instance.

"Yes?" I said encouragingly.

"But if Middle Age makes a misstep, he falls among those who jeer."

"It is the literature of the age," I told him. "We are victims to those who illustrate bad fiction. We have gone back to the age of the immature hero and heroine."

"There is no immature heroine," said Dexter wisely.

He sighed heavily.

I had not seen him for nearly ten years. He was one of those Americans of breeding who aim at pleasant posts in the displomatic service and pass amusing lives collecting anecdotes of greater men.

"The last time I sat in this club window with you," he reminded me, "Hastings Stannard was with us."

"So he was," I cried. "I haven't thought of him for years. What's happened to him?"

"He married and settled down."

"I could have imagined him in any light but that of a contented Benedick."

"It wasn't his idea to settle down when he married," Dexter explained. "I saw him a week ago tonight. I saw him first meet the woman. I watched the whole thing. That's what set me to thinking how Youth may make a blunder, but how men of my age and his and yours too—bruise their knees when they fall."

Although I never cared much for Stannard, I allowed him his obvious qualities. I had known few handsomer men than he nor men more adroit in fascinating women. But he lacked all scruples in their pursuit.

I always held that there were rules to the game. Stannard was a man who would as soon catch a trout on a heavy line or shoot at a bird that was not in flight. He was not to be shamed in such matters. He once told me that if he wanted to catch a salmon, shoot a pheasant or make a woman love him, he took as few chances as possible. He did not want to give any of them a sporting chance to escape.

"You never liked Stannard," Dexter said, interrupting my thoughts.

"I disapproved of his technique," I answered. "I am not free of blame where women are concerned, but I never played the game as he did. I do not like professionalism in love."

"I know who was the more successful," Dexter returned.

Then his face fell.

"Poor old Hastings," he sighed.

"He's not old," I insisted. "We are all three of an age."

"Poor old Hastings," he repeated. "A week ago I crossed from Harwich to see him—I came over on the *Mauretania* that's how it happens to be only a

week—I went to see him and when I got there, I hadn't the heart."

By infinite coaxing and patience I unbosomed Dexter of the whole story.

"It was ten years ago this summer," he explained. "I was with the Embassy at The Hague and had three months leave of absence. I should have come over here, but there was a very charming woman in Brussels who had a villa on the Belgian coast, at a place called Blankenberghe. It's not far from Ostende. Rather a pretentious place aping Ostende manners. Ostende does not know it exists. My friend had discreet Walloon servants and there was never a breath of scandal. We met and kissed, and we kissed and parted with the memory of a charming summer. It was after she had gone to Paris to meet her husband that I fell in with Stannard.

"He had been drinking too much and was recommended salt air and exercise. He moved to a fishing village a few miles away called Heyst. No fashion at all in those days. A lighthouse, a pier and a digue. We walked the day after we got there to Belgium's last village, a place close to the Dutch frontier, called Knocke. That, too, had a lighthouse and a digue, but no pier. There were a few villas and a golf course belonging to the English Sports Club at Bruges. There seemed little to recommend it to us and we should never have thought of it a second time but for a woman we saw. Stannard was like a pointer or setter when he saw game. He stopped suddenly and stiffened."

"Who was she?" I demanded, "a peasant girl?"

"No," Dexter answered. "A fashionably dressed woman and really lovely. Stannard found a little hotel and immediately asked the proprietor who she was. She was not popular in the village, it seemed, because she and her husband occupied a furnished villa, spoke to none, and had all their supplies sent from Bruges. The tradespeople resented it. Summer visitors are always fair game, everywhere. They were named Martin, and the hotel keeper assumed them to be English—in those days they did not know the difference—and said they had no friends. He said also that Monsieur Martin was old and an invalid."

"And I'll bet you," I interrupted, "that your precious Hastings pricked up his ears when the man said it. To find a beautiful woman with an old and infirm husband was the luck he always looked for."

"Well," Dexter allowed, "it made things easier. Stannard raved about her hands from the first. They were beautiful. Long, white, slender, lovely things that looked made to be kissed. She was quite young, little more than twenty, but she had those deep-set eyes that hold their secrets so well and yet find out all of yours at a glance. You remember those Belgian villas on the digues? There's a covered-in balcony six feet or so above the level of the sidewalk where, in the hot days, the people sit very much as our own do on their piazzas.

"We walked up and down the digue a score of times before we found which villa was hers. Outside was painted Villa l'Hirondelle. I always associate her in my mind with those lovely hands hanging just over the railing's edge.

"Before we turned in that night we passed again and there she was looking out to sea with those white hands gleaming in the moonlight. Can you imagine me at thirty-nine, a philanderer by pursuit, wanting to write verses like a love-crazed boy? But that night I wove some. I likened her hands to white wistaria blooms moving just a little as the breezes caressed them in the starlight."

"But Stannard," I said, "would be more likely to be busy planning his campaign."

"He was," Dexter admitted. "There is newspaper blood in him. A grandfather made a fortune in a Philadelphia paper. He has the instinct for news. He left early next morning for Brussels. I did not see him for a day or two. When he came back he was full of news. This old man Martin was our

own millionaire—Ethrington Martin. Of course you remember him?"

"Who doesn't?" I returned. "One of the most picturesque old *roués* who ever drove a coach-and-four in this town and Newport. Our mothers were warned against his wiles and legends of his scarlet sins charmed my schoolboy days. But he's been dead ten years, surely?"

"Not quite," Dexter said. "You shall hear. Stannard had found out all about it from a pal in our legation in Brussels. After three unhappy marriages old Martin, like David of old, sought out a young girl. Oddly enough he married a very rich one. Stannard knew the number of her millions. He would have it that she married to find out what other women had seen in him. Certainly she was very attentive. I never saw him on the digue. He sat in the open room of the villa drinking in sea breezes and what sunshine God vouchsafes to Belgium.

"I never knew what brought him to remote Knocke. Stannard said it was to keep this beautiful woman away from men. Stannard explained her care of him by attributing it to remorse. He said she had been unfaithful to her husband and that she was ashamed. Women, he said—and God knows he had experience—had stray flashes of conscience to keep them from utterly going to pieces morally. We used to talk about it for hours."

"Did you call?" I asked.

"We contemplated it," Dexter answered, "but the old man used to glare at us so offensively that we decided not to. I can see him now. No man ever looked so much like a hawk as he. A fierce face that sometimes looked dead but for the angry eyes. Everything was burned out in him but those eyes. They followed us up and down the digue.

"I knew very well that he understood why we stayed on in Knocke when neither of us played golf or knew a soul. He was like a watch-dog. I used to wonder what sort of a man he had been when he was in his prime and those stories we heard about him were being lived."

"I'm quite sure," I said a little vindictively, "that Stannard was glad to see him safely anchored to his chair."

"You're not fair to Hastings," Dexter said with some heat. "Hastings could fight when need called for it. I've seen him. He would have gone after that girl if the old buccaneer had been his own age. He chose his own way. It was his nature. One night he came to our wretched hotel treading on air. He had kissed the hands to which I had written verses. When I heard it I tore my rhymes into ribbons.

"After that it was easy sailing. They used to meet on the dunes, those little hills of sand spiked through with tall, dry grasses. I never even spoke to her. Business called me to Paris for a week. When I came back I passed the Villa l'Hirondelle and looked up. She wasn't there, but old Martin was. That old pirate cut at me as I passed with a cane and nicked a bit of flesh out of my ear. I couldn't do anything, although I felt I should like to clutch at his scraggy throat and strangle him. I'd never spoken to her even.

"When I got to my room I knew why. There was a note from Hastings. He had eloped to England with her. I was to wire a hundred pounds to him at the Savoy. He was happy at last, he said, as money troubles were not going to bother him any more."

"He was thinking of her millions," I commented. "Certainly he was a professional."

"That evening," Dexter went on, "a servant came from old Martin asking me to call. I said I'd be hanged if I would. My ear was still sore. Later on I passed by. I'd an idea he thought I should be afraid to. But I passed by on the other side this time. He was sitting, as I had always seen him, brooding like the last vulture of his race. Only his eyes seemed to be alive and they seemed to be covered with the blue film one sees in some sorts of birds. He seemed older and feebler even than usual. I could imagine that his violence

had spent his strength. Next day there came a formal apology. He said he had esteemed my father. He said he was alone, about to die, and wanted me to answer some questions about my friend."

"I hope you went," I said.

"Unwillingly," Dexter admitted. "For all I knew his dying legacy to me would be a bullet. His reputation for violence was not an exaggerated one."

"'Do you know why I have sent for you?' he said.

"I could not affect to misunderstand him. I murmured something about being sorry. I ended by saying that Stannard would do the honorable thing and marry her as soon as the divorce would be obtained."

"'She's *not* married,' said old Martin.

"Gad!" I thought, "the old reprobate didn't marry her after all!"

"'Your friend,' said old Martin, 'belongs to a type I have never before met and shall never have the opportunity to now. I've played fast and loose with women, married and unmarried, but they knew I was after 'em. They had their ways of escape. But here am I, an old man, eighty-two, sir, nearly eighty-three, and dependent for further existence on certain diets and care which she alone could give me. I could have excused him if he had taken my wife—'

"'I don't see why,' I interrupted, 'you should accord greater value to a common-law wife than to a legal one.'

Dexter paused for a moment.

I could see he was visualizing the scene.

"Do you know," he declared earnestly, "it came as a shock to see that aged wreck laugh. I looked at him as one might at a child bursting into mirth during some beautiful ritual of an old faith.

"'Then you think,' he said when his old body was recovered from the effort it had expended, 'that I am cursing him for running off with Mrs. Ethrington Smith? I thought the whole world knew my wife eloped with Sir Henry Godolphin four months ago and is on his yacht somewhere. I welcomed it. I have even left him my shooting-box in Perthshire for the relief he afforded me. Sir Henry took a chance just as I might have done, and did, more than once, and as you've no doubt done. But your damnable friend has robbed me of my trained nurse, the only woman who knows how to keep me alive. I thought I had her here until I die. This cursed villa is a fee for her care. I've even left her a few thousand francs a year to keep it up.'

"He was silent for a long time. His face was so white, the respiration so imperceptible, I thought he was dead. Presently those startling eyes looked at me . . .

"'Tell me,' he said with a chuckle, 'it was those hands of hers that caught him, eh? They caught me.'"

"Poor old chap," I said, when Dexter had finished. "What happened to him?"

"He died that night," my friend answered.

"What happened to the nurse and Stannard?"

"A very curious ending," Dexter mused. "Old Martin died from locomotor ataxia, the disease from which under no circumstance can a really good man pass out. He had earned it. Those scarlet nights, the rioting, the women he had loved, the hard, vivid life he had lived had their toll of him. The only wonder to me is how he put it off to an age that is remarkable in the most abstemious man . . .

"When Stannard found out he had married a trained nurse who did not intend to exercise her professional gifts to support a husband—his money was gone, I'd been supporting him for a year or more—they came back to the Villa l'Hirondelle at Knocke. There was almost enough to live on and I added a little more. There was no doubt that she was a woman of tremendous fascination. She had captured the roving Stannard absolutely. He wrote that he was preparing to settle down and be good, and that the prospect was enthral-

ling. Suddenly he began to experience lightning pains in all parts of his body that made him cry out when they struck him. There were other symptoms, too.

"A few years later he was sitting in old Ethrington Martin's wheeled chair suffering from the same thing. I saw him begin to have that hawklike, watching air as people passed up and down the red brick digue before the Villa l'Hirondelle. He tried to make her cease from leaning over the railing, but it was no use. That's why I didn't say goodbye to him just a week ago tonight."

"A most disappointing reason," I cried. "The poor devil was looking forward to it without a question."

"There was more than that," Dexter said crustily. "I'd better tell you. I put up at the Grand and thought I'd dine there before going to see them. At the next table was a party of Oxford undergraduates. They have a habit of taking a tutor with them and playing golf half the day and reading for honours the other half. I noticed one of them in particular because he was one of the handsomest men I'd ever set eyes on. Tall, strong, but with features that were perfect. Not more than twenty, I should judge, and unspoiled. I heard him tell his tutor he had a headache and would go to bed instead of reading with the rest.

"It happed that I was later in going to Stannard's than I expected to be. It was drizzling a little and few people were abroad. As I came to the light near the villa I could see a tall man standing as Hastings used to stand under the railings of the villa. It was my splendid young undergraduate and the hands he was kissing were the hands to which I had woven verse. I couldn't go in, old man, I felt too much upset. I thought of old Ethrington Martin and then I thought of poor Hastings. I couldn't face him. Later I tried to go back. I came almost as far as the door. The man had gone; but through the heavy, misty night air I could see those pale, etiolate hands hanging down like graceful perfumed blooms from some dark vine."

SOME CHICKEN

By Edwina Pope Larimer

LITTLE three-year-old Billy had been greatly impressed with his first long railroad journey. His mother, some days after the trip, was coaxing his appetite. "See Billy," she said, "here's a piece of chicken, some white meat from the breast. And here's a nice piece of dark meat! Where do you suppose that came from?" Billy looked at the dark meat and then made a guess. "The porter," he said, between bites.

WHEN a woman can no longer annoy a man by the most obvious devices, she marries him.

WHEN nursing disappointment, don't forget the bottle.

AN APOSTROPHE

By Morris Gilbert

AH, little growing moon, tonight you are very young!
Just a kid, out in the dark,
And you've pulled the wings off a fire-fly.

Tomorrow night you'll be a stripling,
Off on a callow tipple
With those idle apprentices, the stars;
Shinning over the tree-fences
And peeking in spinsters' windows—
With the most innocent intentions in the world!

But soon, little growing moon—
(When you're a portly burgher,
Puffy-cheeked, rubicund, and inclined to apoplexy,
Dressed in russet, and very proud)—
Then? Ah, then you'll be far too stolid and lofty,
And much too complacent
To notice
How absurdly happy we shall be . . . .down here . . . .
Four—or five—days from now,
When you've grown to be a portly burgher,
Little growing moon!

INNOCENCE ABROAD

By June Gibson

ONE day he met a girl who could blush.

When he asked her to drink she said that the little bubbles tickled her nose.

When he flirted with a brunette across the room she asked him if the woman was his sister.

When a drunken man passed she clung to his neck because she was frightened.

When he asked her to kiss him she gave him the wet, noisy kiss of a child. . . .

When he asked her to marry him she said she was very sorry, but she had been married for ten years.

THE STATUETTE

By Mildred Cram

I

BENEDICT was sitting in his studio, waiting for his best friend, Mathew, to come in.

Outside, a dirty yellow fog hung over London and wiped out the sun.

It was too dark to read, too dark, of course, to work, and Benedict felt a wave of depression and discouragement close over him. He sat very still, with his eyes on his work. It surrounded him—a whole army of unfinished torsos writhing in every contortion known to the human body, half-shrouded plaster-casts, masques, a row of diminutive horsemen prancing along a shelf, a head of Medusa with staring eyes; feet, hands, fragments of architectural detail—the uncertain, yellow light touched them all with unreality, a distorting and confusing ugliness.

Benedict had a sudden, terrifying rush of feeling, a revulsion, a hate, a soul-shaking conviction that his work was wrong, all wrong, from first to last. He sat perfectly still, gripping the arms of his chair and staring at the ghostly mob he had fashioned, and failed in fashioning. All wrong, from first to last. He looked with a sort of merciless deliberation from one thing to another.

"That was not what I wanted to do, nor that. Why do I see one thing and produce another?"

The certainty of his failure stupefied him.

Sitting there in the pool of dirty shadows, the grotesque proofs of his despicable shortcomings crowded down upon him until his one desire was to rush out of the studio and never come back again. But he got control of this impulse by simply imagining how much more satisfactory it would be to smash the whole lot and then to stand on the *débris* and cry like a woman.

Benedict was forty years old, acutely self-conscious, tender, and absolutely without irony. He was the sort of man who is always fending off the disagreeable, from himself and from everyone else. He could be injured, emotionally, as easily as a child. He loved beauty and knew all sorts of ways to glorify the commonplace, so that life itself, the big, unwieldy, magnificent thing, never came near him at all except draped with dreams and unrealities to hide its nakedness. Above everything in the world he admired success, energy, the restless arrogance and conviction of big talent and big accomplishment, but he could never be anything but timidly vacillating.

He sank deeper into his chair because he heard voices in the corridor, and he would have liked to be alone with his little crisis until he had somehow got hold of himself.

But the voices grew louder, there was a knock at the door, a laugh, and someone called:

"Benedict! Are you here?"

Benedict came up with a struggle through the smothering blanket of depression.

"Come in," he said, in a strange voice.

It was Mathew, with Lucia.

Mathew strode into the room first.

"Good Lord, what a light! You haven't been working, have you? It's the most appalling day—sulphur-colored, deadly, everything. Where are the lights?"

Mathew fumbled along the wall by

the door, found the electric switch and flooded the big room with light.

"That's better. For heaven's sake, Benedict, what's up?"

Benedict was lying back in his chair with his hands over his eyes. He sat up slowly, trying to hide his expression.

"I've been sitting in the dark—" he explained.

Mathew laughed.

"I brought Lucia with me," he said in his loud, vibrant voice, "to hear about my good luck. You two are the only people I care about in London, so I wanted you to know— See here, Benedict, you remember how I've wanted that chapel in the New York cathedral, how I've really staked on it as my big chance. It has always seemed as impossible to get as if I'd tried to pull a star down out of the sky."

He looked from one to the other, his face transfigured. "Well, I've *got* it!"

Lucia made a little inarticulate sound and clasped her hands over her heart.

"Oh, Mathew," she said.

"Both of you—think what it means. A whole chapel, heaven knows how many square feet of wall, to do with as I like! I feel the way Ghirlandajo felt when they gave him Santa Maria Novella. I'm like Michelangelo contemplating the blank ceiling of the Sistine. What I've worked for, what I've dreamed of—and they've chosen *me!*"

He began to walk up and down the studio, weaving an erratic course among the army of Benedict's failures, swinging his arms in big gestures as he talked.

"Think of it! I'm to sail at once. I am going to paint the Flight into Egypt to begin with—after the cartoons you saw. A dark waste of sand, a low-ebbing, stagnant river and the ass, with writhing ears, splashing through. Behind, Joseph goading the beast with a staff. And the Madonna, white, crouched over the Child—you remember it? Lucia, you ought to pose for that!"

He went over to her and touched her cheek lightly.

Then he turned to Benedict.

"It is going to be wonderful—New York, the city of gigantic dreams, where the cathedral blossoms stone by stone, like some monstrous and miraculous flower! I feel as if I had been snatched by an eddy out of a quiet pool and whirled into a vortex. It's immense. It's—it's glorious."

He stopped, just under the head of Medusa, to fling out his arms.

"Work! There is nothing like it—unless it is fame."

And then, with a laugh, "Lucia, will you be glad when I am famous?"

Again Lucia said, with her eyes on his brilliant face, "Oh, Mathew!"

Mathew looked from her to Benedict.

"It seems to me," he said quickly, "that you're both being as glum as funerals. And I thought—"

Lucia interrupted. "It's having you go away, Mathew."

"Oh, but only for a year or two! You two will get along famously without me. Benedict, you'll watch out for Lucia, won't you?"

Lucia did not wait for the answer. She went over to Mathew and put her hands on his shoulders, looking up into his face.

"I want to go with you," she said under her breath.

Mathew's eyes softened momentarily—it was a velvet look that crossed their brilliance. Then he laughed.

"Nonsense, Lucia. Benedict will watch out for you. And when I come back, famous, rich—eh?"

He pinched her cheek. "It doesn't matter to Benedict whether he sells his stuff or not, he's so indecently rich to begin with. But for me—"

Lucia turned in his arms to smile at Benedict. "Fancy Mathew rich! We sha'n't know him—no more shabby coats, no more old shoes—"

Suddenly tears overwhelmed her. "Oh, Mathew, you have got your dream! I'm so happy."

Mathew patted her shoulders with both of his long, nervous hands, but he spoke over the top of her bent head to Benedict.

"I'm to have the altar, too. They gave me the chapel, like a blessed prize

packet, and said: 'We are going to leave you alone in there for as long as you see fit. We rather expect you to do something beautiful, but that is your affair.' No snooping Popes, mind you, to criticize, and no arrogant donor trying to edge into a corner of my fresco and into posterity. Free play!"

"They will let you design the altar, too?" Benedict asked.

"The altar, too. I want you to help with that, Benedict."

"Help you?"

Mathew put Lucia gently aside.

"Don't cry, please, Lucia. It's rather foolish. See here, Benedict, where's some paper?"

Benedict got out of his chair slowly. He had kept his own wretched crisis to himself, decently and courageously. Now he got the paper and stood at Mathew's elbow while he explained.

"I expect to have a reredos, of course, and a triptych. Like this—here and here and here I shall put three statuettes; the centre one, the largest, will be the Madonna—and here Saint John, and there Saint Anthony. D'you see?"

"It looks very small."

"Of course! The chapel is small."

Mathew threw the pencil down and straightened his shoulders. "I want you to do the three statuettes, Benedict."

Benedict looked around the studio. His Medusa's glaring eyes met his unhappy stare and startled an unexpected answer from him. He hadn't meant to tell Mathew.

"You can't want me to try for it—everything I've done is a failure. All of it rot!" he said violently. "I am not going on. I've finished."

Mathew was embarrassed and dropped his eyes before the pain in Benedict's face.

Then he put the slightly tragic moment aside with a sweep of his hands. "Nonsense! You'll think better of it tomorrow, when this beastly fog has cleared."

"What you want," he said, his healthy young voice booming, "is more courage, that's all. You are afraid of yourself. You have such tremendous visions and when you tie down to them they somehow get diminutive—"

"Benedict should have been a silversmith," Lucia said suddenly.

Both men turned toward her.

"And what do you know about it?" Mathew asked.

But he did not wait for the answer, as if it were unimportant. He went over to her and lifted her chin in the palm of his hand, so that he could look down into her calm, very black eyes.

"Now I am going to say good-by, little Lucia. I have to run down to Devonshire to see my people. Somehow they seem to think I'm quite important. Then to Liverpool—so I sha'n't see you again. You have given me much to be thankful for. And I have painted Madonnas that will carry your face through the ages. Are we quits?"

She was as stiff in the circle of his arm as a plaster saint. With her head thrown back, she looked at him. Her eyes were as deep as a lake and as black as a crow's wing; there was pain in them, love and a simple renunciation. He meant unutterable things to her. Every word he had ever said to her had been an adventure. She adored him more than all her saints, more than her beauty, more than delectable life itself. If she had not been so simple, his genius and his selfishness would have hurt her long before this.

Now, for the first time, she saw how hard and brilliant and consuming the flame was. She stood very still while it consumed her. Then faintly, without a word, only a gentle smile, she gave him her lips.

"Good-by."

"Take care of Lucia, Benedict," Mathew said in a quiet voice, letting her slip out of his arms again, "and think over what I said about the statuettes."

II

Benedict went to the door, his hand on Mathew's shoulder. He stood there a moment watching his friend as he

walked quickly away down the long corridor, and behind him he could hear Lucia's unrestrained weeping.

He watched until Mathew had disappeared into the lift like a genii swallowed up by magic, whisked out of the present into an invisible and magnificent future. Then, with a wretched, suffering face, Benedict went back to Lucia.

"We have to be thankful," he said to her, "for his sake. Besides, he will come back before long."

Lucia stifled her tears. For her, all the rest of eternity was emptiness.

Mathew had kissed her into heaven and had left her there. It would have been better if he had not kissed her so much to begin with. She was only twenty years old and, being very lovely and not easily pleased, she had given him her heart. Other men had never been able to get as much as a glance from her; she was surprisingly cool and direct for a girl of her class. She did not know much about her simple beginning. Her mother had been an Italian, a Tuscan—that much Lucia knew—and had crossed the continent with a wandering troupe of acrobats when Lucia was a little girl.

But Lucia's mother need not come into the story beyond proving that marriage with Lucia, for Mathew, would have been out of the question, a quixotic absurdity that never entered his head. He was not the sort of fool who puts his foot into a morass of family disapproval simply because he happens to be in love. There are men who can see ambition and love as two distinguishable things, to be treated differently and accepted separately.

But Mathew could reject everything, almost without a pang, that might get between him and the high, clear heights of his purpose. He was not a blackguard; he was simply resolute.

Lucia raised a tear-stained face and groped for Benedict's hand.

"Don't blame him," she said.

Benedict did blame him, but he said nothing. While Lucia was trying inconspicuously to get hold of herself, he made tea. He began by lighting a fire in the deep hearth, getting down on his hands and knees to blow lustily at its feeble commencings. Then he brought out a table, started the big brass samovar, and busied himself tremendously measuring out six spoonfuls of tea into the teapot.

Lucia was startled to find herself watching him, dry-eyed, quite calm, as if the clattering of the spoons against the cups and Benedict's cutting a lemon into thin, precise slices were the most interesting things in the world. It was an unspeakable relief not to have to think of Mathew just then. And suddenly she saw Benedict clearly for the first time.

He was tall and very thin and wore his clothes with that curiously English combination of carelessness and distinction. His very fine, light hair was cropped close and he wore a small mustache twisted at the ends. He looked like a soldier, one of those just-back-from-India Majors one meets everywhere in England. He might have been reticent, punctilious, not over imaginative, the sort of man who pursues an elusive chimera known as good form to the very brink of a decorous grave. No casual observer could have even remotely guessed that Benedict was a frantic poet, a hopeless romanticist, as lost to reason, when it came to beauty, as a lotus-eating heathen.

He was quite typical as far as the eye could penetrate him, all bound up in conventions and too shy to break them, too decent perhaps. Lucia was right. He should have been a silversmith, working with delicate tools and a lamp in some dim, fifteenth-century shop. He should have made jewel-caskets, buckles, goblets and rings. And the poor fellow, swept away by Mathew and his other boisterous, heroic, overpowering gods, was trying to be a Rodin—

"Benedict," Lucia said suddenly, as the samovar began to hiss and bubble, "will you begin the statuettes at once? I want to pose for the Madonna."

Benedict flushed slowly.

"I'm afraid I'm an awful duffer," he began.

"Nonsense." Lucia stood up and stretched her long, shapely arms over her head. "I'll come to-morrow, at noon. Is tea ready?"

III

Every day for a year Lucia posed for the statuette. She stood a little above Benedict, with her head thrown back and one hand crossed over the other. Her dress fell in straight folds, like metal, around her long limbs. Day after day she watched him, while the statuette went from bad to worse. Every time he raised his eyes he met her grave glance. She had a trick of listlessness, a cool disregard of everyone, an air, or was it an illusion, Benedict wondered, of cherishing a seductive secret.

Her secret, to tell the truth, was not seductive. For a long time Lucia had known that the fragile thread that bound her to life was quite likely to break. She had had the doctor's verdict before Mathew left, when everything she loved most was too clamorous to let the thought of death become real or terrifying or even piteous. She had recoiled, of course, for a while. But in keeping it from Mathew, she had lost the first horror of her encounter with the truth—they had said a year in Switzerland would cure her, they had promised her health and her old leaping vitality again, so she had thrown herself into a race with fate, excited, touched, almost, by a sense of adventure. And, with Mathew gone, it had overtaken her.

Once or twice during the long winter, letters came from him, emotional, exuberant—messages full of an almost vicious egoism.

"Dear Benedict," one said, "New York has me, heart and soul. It is bigger than anything you've ever dreamed of, and it goes on getting bigger every day, like the inflation of a monstrous bubble. I look at my chapel and say, 'I am helping to build the greatest dream of all.' And that, somehow, is enough. Nothing decorous here, nothing reticent—it is all blatant, all gilded, all violent. Sometimes I hate it so that I could howl like a dog. But I can never again avoid it. Rome must have been like this in the days of the empire."

"And he says nothing else?" Lucia would ask.

Benedict would turn the sheet of paper over two or three times.

"Nothing else."

And he was always ashamed to meet her eyes.

He told her a thousand times that Mathew would come back. And after a while, when there were no more letters, he trumped up feeble excuses. Mathew was busy. He was being made much of in New York. He hadn't time to write. Some day he would turn up, rich, famous, but the same old chap, the same old Mathew, to take them by surprise. Lucia would see!

But Lucia always shook her head and smiled faintly.

"Mathew has forgotten."

She was no fool. She had kissed Mathew good-by, and that, she knew, was the end of him. For her, at least. She knew Benedict was falling in love with her and little by little she pushed him to his knees. With his surrender, the statuette began to be a beautiful thing. As if Mathew's violent, disturbing art had passed like a brass band blaring through a quiet street, Benedict was finally left alone with himself. Out of the silence and his passion there appeared something exquisite, very perfect, the figure of a woman, drooping slightly, with crossed hands and a dress falling in heavy, straight folds. When it was finished, Benedict cast it in secret and then brought it to Lucia.

"D'you like it at all?" he asked shyly.

Lucia looked at it. Then she put her hand on his shoulder, deliberately, with a little tender pressure of her fingers.

"Benedict," she said, "it is the most beautiful thing in the world."

He turned with a white face and caught her deeply into his arms, kissing

her as though he kissed his art and his poetry.

"Love, love," he said to her, "oh, my love!"

Lucia touched his hair with her fingers.

"I hope you aren't going to mention Mathew again," she said.

"D'you love me enough to marry me?"

The look she gave him was full of her mysterious gentleness. "I'll have to tell you, Benedict; I may not live through another winter. At Davos, perhaps—I'm tired, but perhaps—You're such a wonderfully kind friend that I couldn't bother you with this. But if you love me—"

The sight of Benedict's face and the love she saw there brought a dazing flood of tears to her eyes. She felt suddenly safe, and very calm, as if she had staggered out of an exhausting wind into the shelter of a familiar doorway. She leaned slowly forward against his shoulder and they stood clasped together, in silence.

IV

THE day before they were married, Benedict went to his studio to say a sort of shamefaced farewell to the statuette. He went alone and stood before it for a long time, amazed by what he had done. When he went to cover it, he saw that someone, the charwoman probably, had put his morning mail on the pedestal, tilting the letters conspicuously to catch his eye. It was a perverse trick of fate that one of them should have been from Mathew.

Benedict glanced at the envelope and turned it over and over before he could decide to open it, because the very black, thick handwriting somehow destroyed the exaltation of his sentimental moment. It was like a loud laugh, a disturbing interruption.

Benedict thought of throwing the letter away, but the idea was offensive, and he finally opened it. It contained two messages, one for him and one for Lucia. Benedict read them both.

"Benedict, old top," the first ran, "I am coming home some time this summer. The chapel is almost finished. What about the statuettes?"

And the other: "Lucia, Lucia! I am rich and famous. Will you be glad to see me?"

Benedict stood holding the two sheets of paper gingerly.

He felt a remote pity for himself at the thought that if he told Lucia he must lose her, but over and above that thought something unrecognizable in him urged him to destroy the letters and not to lose Lucia at all. Still holding them, he glanced up at the statuette.

"Mathew doesn't care, one way or the other," he was surprised to hear himself say aloud. The statuette looked back at him, smiling its beautiful, enigmatic smile, touched with irony and gentleness. And Benedict, with his heart beating, sick with shame, tore the letters into strips and threw them away. . . .

They went at once to Switzerland, and because Lucia plead to travel a little, "before Davos," Benedict took her to a hotel on the water's edge at Montreux, where she saw Lèman for the first time and the opalescent flanks of the Dent du Midi, thrusting out of the lake into a cloudless sky.

"I see," Lucia said, exalted by all this beauty, "that my dying is going to be a beautiful thing."

And so it was. A magnificent and impartial Spring flooded the world with sunshine, powdered the hill-slopes with flowers, ruffled the surface of the lake with tiny, gay breezes, puffed almond and cherry and apple bloom into every orchard and laid down luscious carpets of green over the whole face of the world. Benedict took Lucia to Salvan for a month. They had a small house on the flowery slopes of La Creusaz, well out of the shadows of the deep-sliced valley. In the afternoon they would walk as far as the Rochers du Soir and have tea, sitting in the flecked-gold shadows of a little grove of larch. Afterwards Benedict would talk of art and of life, always of life, while Lucia

listened gravely, her dark head on his shoulder. In August they were at Stresa, because Lucia was better and Davos, as a necessity, seemed as far away as the end of a dream. And from there it was only a step to a festive Venice, swarming with tourists and glittering like a cut diamond turning in the sun. All day Lucia sat listlessly in their gondola, smiling her vague smile that might have meant anything. Benedict took it to mean that she was still thinking of Mathew.

At night they promenaded the length of the Piazza, watching the façade of San Marco glowing like phosphorus in the starlight. The band played Verdi and Wagner, laying the ghost of old, dim hatreds. Austrians and Germans listened to *Aïda* in sentimental silence; *Parsifal* swept in great waves across a thousand enraptured and responsive Latins. It was all inconceivably romantic, but Benedict had drunk to the dregs of his triumph and the taste of it was appalling and revolting. Mathew got between him and the dream.

"My God, what a mess I've made of it," he said to himself a thousand times a day. "I'm not even a successful blackguard!"

One day he found Lucia reading the Paris *Herald*.

"Oh, Benedict," she said, when he came in, "Mathew is back!"

Benedict felt his heart turn over.

"Back? When?"

"Listen to this: 'Mathew Trenlaven, the famous English artist, has just returned to London from New York, where he has been working for a year on his mural decorations for the Chapel of St. John and St. Paul—' Whew! Benedict, that's a long sentence, isn't it?"

Benedict watched her, trying to penetrate the mystery of her smile.

"Mathew back," he said, "famous, and rich, I suppose—"

Lucia met his eyes squarely. "He will want the statuettes, Benedict; you must go back to London. I've been so selfish. Let me go to Davos alone—really, I shall be all right."

Benedict shook his head, but he did not answer her just then. He was ashamed to meet her eyes and went into his bedroom, shutting the door violently. He threw himself across the bed, and with his fingers pressed against his eyes to hold back the offensive and blatant tears, he suffered the utter decolation of shame.

After that, Lucia lost her breathless race; she was too indifferent, it seemed, to go on. They left a blazing Venetian September and surrendered finally to Davos. And in six months Benedict came down from the mountains without Lucia. Gently, quietly, almost imperceptibly, her life had flickered out. She spoke of Mathew only once.

"D'you remember," she said to Benedict one day, "that Mathew said he had painted Madonnas that would carry my face through the ages? His Madonnas will be faded and forgotten when your statuette is still the most beautiful thing in a beautiful world."

So she paid her debt.

V

MATHEW was busy in London when Benedict, after an awful journey, arrived there. Success had not disillusioned Mathew at all, because he had not had to struggle for it. In the midst of his magnificent activities he found time to like a great many people, to accept a tremendous amount of affection, to discover every day how simply life resolves itself into an endless repetition of pleasant things if only you are friendly, decent and sane.

And Mathew was absolutely sane!

He strode from one accomplishment to another as easily as a Hercules straddles the globe. His facility and his talent made him conspicuously brilliant, like a new planet among a whole constellation of familiar and somewhat dingy stars. He saw nothing but the best in people and believed nothing but the best of creation. His work, like himself, would not admit of failure.

Opulent and inexhaustible, arresting

and overpowering, like a modern Veronese, Mathew split his abundance over the walls of England. Into this splendor, Benedict brought his dræb tragedy. A note from him, asking Mathew to call at the old studio, "on a matter of great importance," startled Mathew into remembering him for the first time in months.

"What a rummy note from old Benedict," he said, lifting his eyebrows and staring at it. "What have I ever done, I'd like to know—"

But he got his hat at once and went to find out. Benedict was waiting for him, wearing the expression of a martyr.

"A sort of Saint Laurence on the gridiron," Mathew said to himself as they clasped hands. "I wonder what on earth is the matter with the poor fellow."

"Well, Benedict," he said aloud, letting his affection get into his eyes, "it is good to see you again. I looked you up directly I got back, but they told me that you had been away several months. Where in the world—"

"I suppose you know—" Benedict began in a sepulchral voice.

"Know? Know what? I don't know an earthly thing about you."

"I married Lucia."

Mathew started to say something, but the look in Benedict's face silenced him.

"I married Lucia. The day before our marriage, I got your letter saying you were coming to England. I never told her. For two reasons—" Benedict raised his voice and fixed Mathew with his bright, unsteady eyes. "I loved her, and I knew you didn't. If she had known there was a chance of seeing you, she would never—"

"Benedict," Mathew interrupted, "there is no need of this, that I can see."

"She loved you!" Benedict shouted. "At the beginning and at the end."

Mathew turned away.

He walked across the room.

"Is Lucia dead?" he asked, after a moment.

Benedict did not answer.

"I'm sorry," Mathew said.

He had come face to face with the shrouded statuette. He hesitated in front of it, uncertain and unhappy.

Then he reached out and lifted the cloth that covered it. "Ah," he said under his breath.

He looked at it steadily for a moment.

Then he seized it, whirled it in his hand, held it close, held it away, fingered it, nosed it, put it tenderly down again, then walked round and around it, lips pursed, eyes screwed, whistling a little sucking whistle. Then he stooped, tip-toed away from it, went back again, turned suddenly and violently on Benedict.

"You *fool!*" he said. "It's glorious! It is the most perfect thing in the world. Oh, God, what fun to see where this will lead you. Lucia! You may thank her for that. What is the hair-span of a life to an immortal beauty?"

And he lifted the statuette in his two hands and kissed it squarely.

A WOMAN'S tears are really often nothing more than little liquid cuss-words.

DISTANCE does not always lend enchantment, but perspective.

MR. JIMMY DELANE OF BROADWAY

By Achmed Abdullah

I

IN San Francisco he might have passed for the manicured, gardeniaed, and otherwise effete Easterner of tradition, come West to sneer at the Native Sons, the Native Oranges, and the Native Sand Fleas of the Slope, while in any of the Long Island corsair beach resorts—the sort famed for their sunsets and clam fritters—he might have passed for the latest millionaire out of the West, come East to sport his pink gills and yellow backs—treasury ones, payable in gold on demand. But a bred-in-the-bone Broadwayite would have given him the thrice-over and then registered, labeled, and dismissed him for what he was.

For his complexion was hand-laundered, his pompadour hard-boiled, his mustache short and bistre-brown and curled like the tail of a festive suckling pig; his clothes accentuated the bold Louis Seize curve of his body, his necktie looked like a Vorticist Oleograph of *Flatbush by Moonlight*, his watch was octangular in shape and Ingersoll in make, and his feet were innocent of neither spats nor arch supports.

Add to these external characteristics a whiff of harmless homespun psychology: a nose, as it were, turned to the ground and sniffing with the air of a lackadaisical bloodhound for gossip and rumor and the Big News; a manner which struck a happy medium between the young John Drew and the old marquis of the days before the guillotine was put into working order; a charge account in all the hotel bars on Forty-seventh east of Broadway, and a cigar-case choked with off-color perfectos.

Add, furthermore, a racial dislike, an atavistic hatred, freely voiced, against the Sturdy Yeomanry of Yonkers and the Brawny Peasantry of Brooklyn—and you have—

Exactly! Mr. Jimmy Delane, press agent for the musical comedy "Stop! You Make Me Blush!" adapted from the French revue "O Boug' de Saligaud!" which, in turn, was lifted from the German musical farce "Hör' Dir Mal Den Blech An!" which, to complete the merry rondelay, had been plucked from the American success of five years before, "Cut It Out, Kid!"

Never lived there a better press agent between the chocolate brown of the Hudson and the melancholy slate gray of the East River. He could sell to the veteran city editor, at space rates, a tale of how Zoe Tremaine, the star over at the Gaiety, had spent three hours every day for a month to master the art of interpreting nervous emotion by wiggling her décolleté back in a manner suggestive of soft doughnuts bobbing up and down in the skillet, and how McCarthy Tibble, the low comedian, had contracted septic rheumatism by his trick of holding his big toes akimbo in that screaming scene where he throws the dish of stewed tripe at the head usher across the footlights.

He could give a new slant to the Inca legend of the operatic star who had her jewels stolen, and a new punch to the Babylonian cuneiform which tells all about May Pickwallet's new Irish-Renaissance pergola on her country estate near Rubber Neck, L. I.

He was a well-salaried genius, and usually he was as happy as a squirrel

in Washington Square; but today he seemed glum.

He looked at the deal table, the scrofulous chairs, and the ornamental cuspidor which endeavored, rather unsuccessfully, to furnish the back room at the Winterset Hotel bar, and then he looked at the purple countenance of Hennessey McParland, who was sitting across from him.

McParland was in the act of assailing his mouth with a stein of bock beer. The bock beer lost. Then he spoke.

"Jimmy," he said, "you gotta do it—or—you know!" he added significantly as he impounded another half pint of chemicals-and-hops; and he waddled out of the room, the skirts of his morning coat moving up and down like frantic propeller blades.

Jimmy knew what the "or—you know" meant.

He looked at the wall and then he shuddered.

For, from a crevice in the paneling, the flat, vindictive eyes of a couple of water-bugs—father and daughter—were staring at him, cruelly, maliciously. It seemed a bad omen.

"Charge 'em up, Oswald!" he cried to the barkeeper as he stepped into the street—and straight into an alluvial deposit of Gotham humanity which was standing stiff aslant against the nipping December wind, the legs breathing defiance to the flapping, ragged trousers that sheathed them, the once-braided coat challenging the fuzzy wool of the greasy sweater, the hat a rimless outrage, the patched shoes moving through the inch-deep snow with the unutterable resignation of a toad between the harrow.

It was a tramp—a tramp of the sad, poignant city streets—a careless fatalist like his cousin, the tittering gutter sparrow. But today he was cold and hungry and miserable. He shivered—like a bandy-legged dachshund afflicted with chilblains—and his hands!—without gloves, red, swollen, pitiable!

Jimmy Delane looked at them.

He was a man of inspirations and lightning decisions.

At once he forgot all about the bad omen, and was as happy as a king full.

Without a word he dragged the unresisting tramp into the glowing warmth of the Winterset Hotel bar, straight into the back room, where he propped him into one of the scrofulous chairs, after giving the wondering barkeeper orders to rush 'em along quick and steaming and with a peel of lemon—

"And a double portion of free lunch," added the tramp, who knew that once more Providence had plucked him like a brand from the burning.

Jimmy was still staring at the tramp's hands, so fixedly that the latter felt embarrassed and tried to hide them—but at once there was a protesting cry from Jimmy.

"Keep 'em on the table! Let me look at 'em!"

"Why?"

"Because they mean Five Iron Men to you!"

The tramp—Clarence Reilly was his name—was a child of Greater New York. Washington Square was not unknown to him, and he had heard of painters and models. So he studied the acute and hirsute magenta of his hands and turned to his host.

"Say, bo," he simpered, "them mitts of mine ain't to worse, are they?"

Jimmy hooted like a drunken Staten Island ferryboat.

"Wott'ya think I want you for?" he inquired sarcastically. "D'ya think I want you on a model's throne dressed in nothing but a piece of hand-painted cheesecloth and a bas-relief wen? Listen here—" and then he explained.

II

THERE was Chloe Van Zyle. (No. Her people had never knickerbockered worth a darn. Her so-and-so-often removed grandsire had not come out of Holland in a high-pooped frigate, nor had he traded in a plug hat, a plugged nickel, and a plug of chewing tobacco for a bully cabbage patch in the eventual vicinity of the Waldorf. She was

née Mary O'Halloran, and her so-and-so-often removed grandsire had fought a brilliant rear guard action at the Battle of the Boyne.) But—there was Chloe. There was Hennessey McParland. And there was Jimmy himself.

Triangle Plot Editorial Announcement: *WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IN EVALEEN'S CASE? COMMENCE THE GREAT SERIAL IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE!*—Forget it! Chloe was the ingenue in *'Stop! You Make Me Blush!'* Hennessey was her Angel. Jimmy touched seventy-five a week and all the expenses he could get away with—and, since the opening of the show, three weeks earlier, there hadn't been a hand for Chloe. *Not a hand!*

"Get me," continued Jimmy. *"Not a hand!* There's her song in Act One where she does the slow Hoola-Hoola as a swell Newport society girl and sings all about *The Odorous Moon where we love to spoon on the Waikahoola-Waikahoola Beach—kahoola-hoo!* Great stuff—but falls flat—flat as a pancake, I tellya! Then she comes on in Two, in a ten thousand dollars chinchilla, made up to look like Jane Addams and sings something up to date about *What did Mr. Bluebeard do when Mrs. Bluebeard joined the Suffrage Party?* What happens? Same thing—not a hand! So I had a heart-to-heart talk with the gent who writes the lyrics, and we had Chloe come on in Three with one of them old-fashioned, sentimental ditties—first-rate stuff! Hoop Skirts! Long, Lacy Pants! Antimacassars! And the words: *Oh, it wasn't so in Grandmother's times, when Streetcar Conductors still was gents!* Real home dope, ain't it? The sort that makes you feel young again—rising two or thereabouts. But—" he shouted the words, *"not a hand!"*

Clarence looked up. His inner man was in a sort of beatific revery—one of those strange and mysterious trains of thought so apt to be suggested by seven Hot Scotches—and the despair which throbbed in the other's accents cut him to the quick. He would have liked to help him.

Still—he was New York to the marrow and worldly-wise. His knowledge had come from the dust and slime of the gutters, but none the less it was thorough and up-to-the-minute; he knew all about Mrs. Vernon Castle and publicity and the sworn duties of press agents.

"You poor simp," he said pityingly, though not unkindly, "why didn't yer . . ."

"I did!" interrupted Jimmy, "I assaulted two city editors and killed three cub reporters out of hand! I had her picture on the front page of the *Evening Post*—yes, the *Evening Post*—done up in a Nell Brinkley border! I got round the red-haired Mick who writes the Middle-Western Women's Special Sob Page for the *Ladies' Home Gazette* and had him describe how she goes straight home from the theater every night and helps her Dad to tuck in his jag! I had her jewels stolen and returned! I had her proposed to by three cowboys, a Presbyterian Minister, the Chief Rabbi of Sweden, Von Tirpitz, and the Chairman of the Democratic Committee! I had her sing *Deutschland über Alles* at the Allies' Bazaar! I tried everything, from manslaughter to mayhem—but not a sound—not a whisper—*not a hand!"*

Clarence was taken aback, and he saw the five dollars which the other had promised him take wings toward the limboes of dreams.

If the trained press agent had failed, how could he help him—he, the tramp of the city streets?

"Say," he began querulously, "you said something about—about them number elevens of mine—" and he held out his hands for inspection.

Jimmy Delane patted them caressingly. He rose. In his eyes there was something almost prophetic.

"The old dope," he murmured, half to himself, "the dear old dope—Shades of Barrett and Keane and Bloodgood! Say—"

"What?" this from Clarence; and Jimmy whispered in his ear.

"Are you on?"

"You bet," replied the tramp, stuffing a five-dollar bill in a mysterious region of his anatomy, and the two parted company—Clarence waddling off toward the Hotel de Gink to snatch a few hours' repose before the evening's labors, while the press agent entered the nearest pay station and called up Hennessey McParland.

III

"It's a pipe, Hen," he sang across the wires. While the other sang back, "It'd better be a *pipe*—or your job'll go *whistling!*"

Jimmy broke into a thin, anemic cackle. He had to. After all, it was McParland who paid him his seventy-five a week. Seventy-five? And this was Saturday—and he had just given five dollars to the tramp. There was only one dollar left him—and up, in her modest Harlem flat, was a little girl with russet hair and grey eyes. He had promised to take her out to dinner—and—

"Say, Hen," he breathed into the telephone, "this is Saturday—"

"Well?—" and Jimmy retorted with a rather inadequate assumption of innocence, "*you know*, old man!"

The other's reply was inexorable:

"No hand for Chloe—no mon' for you! Come through tonight with the big applause—and I'll come through with the mazuma."

"But . . ."

"But—nothing!" and from the other end of the wire came the metallic slam of Hennessey McParland's receiver.

IV

Jimmy was dumbfounded. He had done his best—he, the best press agent on Broadway. It had not been his fault if the public refused to fall for Chloe's superannuated charms and McParland had no right to hold up his cheque.

"Thou infamous malapert!" he grumbled in the direction of the telephone, quoting from a recent Broadway failure which was coining money on the road.

He was thoroughly mad.

McParland was trying to doublecross him—but why should he?

Why? Jimmy had always been loyal, always on the job.

Yes—why?—and, the next moment, he made a shrewd guess at the real reason.

It was Chloe's fault, he decided. Chloe must have noticed that he'd had many a whispered conversation among the dusty stage litter with the little girl, June Trainor, who was her substitute—the little girl with the russet mane and the grey eyes whom he had invited to dinner tonight—the little girl whom he loved—the little girl whom she feared and envied because of her youth and her talent.

Sure—Chloe must have put a bee in McParland's bonnet—and—

Suddenly Jimmy laughed.

Doublecross *him*—the best press agent on Broadway? Let 'em try!—and Jimmy, gaily swinging his cane, hurried to the nearest Western Union office whence he sent a telegram to June Trainor, telling her that he was unable to keep his dinner engagement, telling her furthermore to do certain things which he outlined minutely.

"You must do it," he wired, "you must, must, must, because of your future and mine—" regardless of the fact that each additional *must* cut an additional hole into his last remaining dollar, and then he returned to his hotel, calmly awaiting the outcome of the evening.

That night at the Gaiety, when the ingenue had finished her opening warble about the *Waikahoola Beach*, instead of the usual flat, disheartening silence, a rapturous storm of applause—quick and sharp like musketry fire—broke loose from a corner high up in the gallery.

Even the cynic who played the slide-trombone felt a thrill of surprise trickling down his spine and, while the two-and-a-half dollar élite in the orchestra seats showed their native democracy

by joining in the applause from upstairs by twos and threes—finally by whole rows—the enthusiast in the gallery gave vent to his feelings by rising in all the ragged, tattered, hirsute glory of a city tramp and shouting raucously to the blushing, curtseying ingenue:

"Great dope, kid! Let's hear it once more!"—

And then encouraging shouts from all over the theater, echoing the demand of the olympian.

Even the frigid boxes took up the shout. Already the leader of the orchestra had lifted up his baton to signal the encore.

Not only that—but Walter Darwinter, the dramatic critic, who for the last three years had been denied access to the Gaiety because he would insist in his reviews that the leading lady was not as gifted as Sarah Bernhardt and that the elocutionary powers of the low comedian were inferior to those of Forbes-Robertson, had managed to sneak into an orchestra seat tonight, past the eagle eyes of ticket collector and ushers.

He had sharpened his critical hatchet—already he had made certain notes on the margin of his program which, in tomorrow's issue, would accuse the management of the Gaiety of having returned to the old Continental trick of employing a claque—enthusiasts hired, not because of their dramatic appreciation, but because of the size and strength of their hands . . . when, suddenly, he altered his opinion.

He decided, on the contrary, that he would do the unusual, the unexpected thing; he would accuse the management of the Gaiety of wilfully and deliberately trying to suppress genuine applause—doubtless so as to help them to break an unfavorable contract—

For it became evident that the management had nothing to do with the gallery enthusiast.

On the contrary.

Sturdy ushers were hastening toward him—they propelled him down the stairs and out of the theater with hearty kicks—no!

This was no hired claque. And Darwinter scribbled rapidly.

V

HALF an hour later, in the back room of the Winterset Hotel bar, Jimmy Delane sat once more facing the purple countenance of Hennessey McParland.

For ten minutes at a stretch the latter had been calling him names, delivered in the highest key and with extreme volubility and passion, names which reflected equally on his own morals and on Jimmy's near relations.

"You dub!" he wound up in a low, vindictive voice, "you horse thief! You inflexible article of wooden furniture! You—you submarine captain! Didn't ya know? Didn't ya see?"

"What?"—innocently from Jimmy—and McParland's hissing reply: "*Chloe Van Zyle* did not play tonight! She's got a cold! That was her *substitute*—that was young June Trainor whom your blanketty-blank tramp applauded, you big piece of goulash! Chloe hates her—and you—hang you!—you went and made her! Didn't ya hear me whisper as you passed me in the lobby to tell your tramp to can the enthusiasm?"

"Sure I did!"—Jimmy's reply thrilled with suppressed laughter; and McParland broke into a roar of rage that emulated Niagara—crescendo, still crescendo—wavering, faltering—then dying away to a feeble tittup and the thin, pathetic question "you heard me—d'ya mean to say you did it on purpose?"

"You bet!" replied Jimmy nonchalantly.

He finished his drink.

He rose.

He called McParland a few names of his private vintage.

"Try to doublecross me?" he said, with a laugh, "tried to hold out my seventy-five bones—when you knew I was bust—when you knew I had been trying my darnedest for you and yer precious Chloe? Listen here—yer fat, man-eating hyena!—I knew that Chloe had a cold—knew it before you did— Say," he brought his face within an inch of

the other's, "it was *me* who fixed the whole thing! It was *me* who got her that cold!"

McParland was speechless for a minute.

"Wott'ya mean?" he finally stammered out. And again Jimmy laughed—loud and long and cruelly.

"'Member how Chloe always has to have her back powdered just before she jigs on in Act One?" he asked. "'Member how she always manages to mislay her maid just at that moment—and how she always has June do it for her—just to make her lose face in front of the company? 'Member all that?—well—I tipped June the wink—I told her to slip a piece of ice down Chloe's back. *Ice!* and ice don't go well with a constitution that's fed on terrapin and cocktails. Get me? She sneezed—she shivered—she coughed—and right then it was time for the curtain to go up . . . and it was up to June to take Chloe's part—and—" Jimmy continued inexorably, "did ya see Darwinter in the audience? Say—just watch the papers tomorrow—won't they boost little June up to the skies? Say! She won't get an engagement after tonight. O no—she won't! And I won't be her press agent after tonight . . . and her big beau. O no—I wont!"

He paused and shook his finger under the other's nose. *"O yes—I will!"* he wound up triumphantly and he stalked out of the bar, leaving McParland to pay for the drinks.

THE SENTIMENTAL JURY

By Elsie McCormick

THE lady was being tried for murder.

She had heard that her husband had been—well, flirting with another woman. And she had shot him.

"This man had desecrated his home and dragged his wife's soul in the dust," thundered her young attorney. "She did just what any self-respecting woman would have done under the circumstances!"

The jurors wept and acquitted her, of course.

But after court each one of the twelve good men and true hastened to tell a lady-friend that hereafter they would have to be very, very careful.

A MAN is old the moment he thinks of the follies of his youth and tries to repeat them.

MORE dangerous than a serpent's sting is a lonesome woman.

A GIRL in the arms is worth two in the heart.

BIRDIE'S SWAN SONG

By Vesta Tharp

I

BIRDIE had decided to be tough. She wanted to be bad. She intended to go straight to the dogs.

Birdie was twenty-two and pretty, and she sang in the Baptist choir. That is to say, when at home she had sung in the choir; but now that she was in Chicago and on the road to perdition, she no longer sang in any church choir. To be sure, there was a big, gray stone church only half a block from the huge apartment building in which she roomed; but she always hurried by it with quick, nervous steps and averted eyes. Birdie, for all her determination to be bad, was not of the easily calloused kind; and it seemed that Chicago churches had a habit of stringing themselves out seductively all over the city, in particularly unexpected and uncalled-for places.

That was what was the matter with Birdie on this August night. It was hot. Windows had to be open. It was Wednesday night—prayer-meeting night. Birdie was afraid. Soon, from across the street, on the heat-quivering waves of stifling air, would come the refrains of sanctimonious songs—old-fashioned, familiar and somewhat creepy tunes. Birdie knew. She knew because she had heard them for the past three Wednesday nights. And she dreaded them.

It was not that the sacred music stirred up any penitential emotions in her soul and brought prodigal tears to her eyes. Far from it. The singing did clutch and pull unmercifully at her heart-strings and bring the burning-hot tears; but they were not tears of regret. The music drove Birdie wild, frantic, crazy with grief and pain. She wanted to scream—she wanted to tear her hair—she wanted to pick the big stone church up in her hands, crush it together and hurl it far out into Lake Michigan. She ached to see the dark waters close in around and over it. She wanted to hear the choked drowning of the half-finished singing.

Perry Johnson had sung in the Baptist Church choir. He still sang in it. That was why Birdie had come to Chicago. No, there was no scandal attached to her coming. At least not yet. Birdie was really not that kind of a girl. She wanted to be bad, but she did not know how to go at it.

Until four months ago she had lived the happy and indifferent life of a carefree maiden. Clerking at the glove counter in Plainsville's only department store for seven a week was not bad, considering that Birdie lived at home and the seven was her own to spend as her sweet will dictated. Up to that time, four months ago, she had not spent four hours thinking in her whole life. The world was a pleasant place, the days were tranquil enough, and since the delivery of her high-school valedictory oration Birdie had forgotten that there was such a word as "future." But she had spent much time thinking lately—too much time.

Birdie was heart-broken. Her first unhappy love affair had left her crushed, stunned, utterly smashed. She did not see how she could stand it to live any more. The empty future frightened her. Life with nothing to

look forward to and a terrible aching hurt always to carry around in the place where one's heart ought to be—life under such conditions is a sort of a living hell. Birdie preferred the dead hell. Therefore—Chicago.

Perry Johnson had kissed Birdie. Merely kissed her, that was all. It had happened one night when he was bringing her home from choir practice. The experience had proved so pleasantly satisfactory that he had kissed her some more—and some more—and some more. Possibly the April-scented air had had something to do with the deed; possibly the softly caressing moonlight playing on the shimmering smoothness of her brown hair had tempted him—but anyway, whatever it was, he had kissed her.

Birdie had never been kissed before, not in that way. Her father had kissed her, her uncle had kissed her, and once a big cousin had kissed her. But in some miraculous way Birdie had reached the advanced age of twenty-two without ever having experienced the slightest suggestion of a love affair. If she had only had the kisses that fell to her lot on that April night scattered and dispersed over the three or four years previous, it might not have gone so hard.

It must be acknowledged that Birdie enjoyed those kisses. Such a thing as loving Perry Johnson had never occurred to her; but with his arms tightly about her, her head on his shoulder, and his face pressed against hers—all at once, with a wonderful wave of understanding, came the realization that she loved him, loved him madly. At that moment Birdie lost her heart, and what is worse, her head.

She never could forget that precious night. Afterwards they had gone in the house, and Birdie had played the piano for Perry. There had been an opened sheet of music on the piano. Birdie had played it and sung the words with a heart brimming over with happiness. She now believed those words were going to haunt her the rest of her life:

Love, here is my heart,
One tender refrain;
Yours if you echo the tune,
Yours if you tire of it soon—
Whether you laugh as you depart,
Or hear it again—
Something to listen to yet,
Or forget,
Here is my heart!

Many things can happen in a few weeks if they once get started happening. It took exactly three weeks to smash Birdie's heart into the finest of smithereens, and to destroy completely the confident, poised, joyous nature of her youth. But before the crash came she had had her three weeks of absolute bliss.

Birdie was decent and clean and straightforward—just as the second vice-president of the Baptist Young People's Society should be. It is true that she had enjoyed Perry Johnson's kisses, and it also might be mentioned that she had returned them with fully as much fervor as could be expected from such a prim, innocent, and untutored little person. She was, as Perry Johnson confided to his bosom friend, Dave Hemway, a "good scout" and "some sweet little chicken."

To Birdie her admirer's kisses had had only one meaning—marriage. After that April night she had lived in an ecstatic dream of bliss. The dream comprised a heavenly courtship, a cedar chest of hand-worked linen, a new bungalow somewhere on the edge of town, a husband to love and cook for, and a heavy gold band ring guarded by another circlet flashing a diamond solitaire.

It was the diamond solitaire that knocked Birdie out of her dreaming. The weeks passed without Perry once mentioning it. There had been three weeks of moonlight strolls, and visits to the moving-picture shows interspersed with choir practice and church. Perry devoted a due share of the time to spooning. But he received a distinct little shock one night while in the act of squeezing Birdie's hand. The

shock came when Birdie shyly suggested that she would like her diamond engagement ring to have a Tiffany setting. Perry dropped her hand quickly. He could not get rid of it any too soon. Then came the grand crash.

The young man explained to Birdie gently and firmly that he was not going around the country buying diamond rings with Tiffany settings—or any other kind of settings. Moreover, he was investing no money in plain band rings. He expressed surprise that Birdie had formed such an opinion of him. He had given her no cause for drawing such a conclusion, and he did wish she could use some sense and be reasonable.

It was then that Birdie showed how hopelessly and insanely she had fallen in love with the Baptist choir's tenor. Instead of drawing herself up with dignity and crushing the gay deceiver by her coolly indifferent manner, as any young lady in her right mind would have done, the poor child wilted completely and threw herself, crying, into his unwilling arms. Between gasping sobs she begged him to tell her he was joking, she pleaded for his love, she wept and clung to him in an utter abandon of frenzied grief.

Perry lost no time in getting the matter definitely finished. He bluntly pointed out to Birdie that there had been no proposal of marriage made, nothing really had happened, anyway—just a little harmless lovemaking—he had meant nothing serious, he had supposed she had not given the matter a serious thought either, and well—that was all there was to it. He did not want to get married; he couldn't get married if he wanted to; he couldn't afford it.

In the end, with a curt "good night," he left a crushed and benumbed girl to stumble up the dark porch steps of her home. A block away he started whistling the choir's anthem for the coming Sabbath morn. He was through with that girl; she made him tired, she made him weary, she made him sick. Always he was able to find a convenient little queen to lavish his affections upon; but never had he wasted a single diamond ring. Good Lord! He didn't want to get married. The girl was a crazy little fool. That's what she was.

And so he went whistling down the street. As far as he was concerned, Birdie was a thing of the past. She belonged on the shelf with the other has-beens.

II

Up in a narrow bedroom with the spring-scented breeze flapping at its muslin curtains the little cast-off has-been laid on her bed. She did not cry. She dared not cry. Home was no place in which to cry. Home also was no place in which to air one's troubles. Ma was making a crocheted bedspread of such an intricate wild-rose pattern that it required all of her reserve force to keep track of the various stitches. For years Ma had been busy at some kind of mind-absorbing fancy work. She was next to the last person in the world to whom Birdie would have thought of going with her heart-aches. It would have taken too long to explain things and get Ma on the right track. Probably she would not have understood even then. Ma and Birdie never talked things over.

Pa was the last person in the world that Birdie could have gone to. Pa was a foreman in the machine shop, and he spent his evenings fixing the chicken-pen in the back yard. When darkness cut short his repairing he would come into the house and read the *Daily News*. It took him a long time to read the *Daily News*. Pa painstakingly read each column with a slow movement of his lips. Sometimes he could be heard whispering the words to himself. At nine o'clock Pa always laid down the paper and went to bed. Birdie's seventeen-year-old sister Midgie could not be relied upon. Midgie had definite, self-centered interests of her own. She might have considered Birdie's unhappy love affair a huge joke—a joke to be eternally mentioned at inopportune times.

All that night Birdie, dry-eyed and sleepless, tossed on her bed. There had been nothing else to do. She could not walk the streets and tramp the heartache out of her breast. So she remained there in the cool darkness, and suffered.

The following weeks were awful for her. The world seemed to go on just the same; but there was a difference. Life was not worth living, each day got worse than the day before. Perry Johnson still sang in the choir. Fluffy-haired Amy Wilkins had become the recipient of his undivided attentions, and, strange to say, no one seemed to think much about it. Not a soul cared whom Perry Johnson went with, or how often he transferred his affections. Birdie was grateful for the town's lack of interest. Perry treated her with a self-possessed, undisturbed air of indifferent friendliness. She was the least of his troubles.

But in Birdie a terrible, consuming fire was burning. She loved Perry Johnson, she worshiped him, she trembled at the sound of his voice in the choir, she quivered with pain at the very sight of him. Existence in the same atmosphere became unendurable.

It was then that she decided to go to Chicago. Birdie really intended to kill herself; she could not live any longer. But she decided to kill herself by a slow, long-drawn-out process. The movies and the 15-cent magazines presented an appropriate method of accomplishing the deed. She would lose herself in the turmoil of the big city. She would commit moral, mental and physical suicide on the chorus-girl route to perdition. She would go on the stage and be bad.

Birdie gave out no hint of her resolution. She told her father she wanted to go to Chicago and take vocal lessons. Ma and Pa had been to Chicago to the World's Fair on their honeymoon. They had been nowhere since. Pa thought that if Birdie wanted to take vocal lessons she had better take them. Ma thought a trip to Chicago would be pretty nice for her. Pa gave her a hundred dollars and told her to go ahead. Ma washed her clothes and helped pack her trunk. Midgie begged to go along, but was flatly refused. The townspeople wished her good luck.

Then she went to Chicago.

III

THIS was her first trip. Had Birdie been a timid, shy, modest girl, fearful of the dangers of the city, she might have encountered them at every corner; but she was a timid, shy, modest girl eager to encounter those dangers, and so they seemed purposely to evade her. Terrible things refused to happen to her. They passed over her, around her, above her; nothing touched her. Birdie found it hard to get started on the primrose path. People ignored her, nobody wanted to know her, nobody cared a rap about her.

Birdie tried a long list of stage managers. Not a one gave her the least particle of encouragement; only a few took the trouble to test her abilities. They were not looking for common, ordinary girls, without a sparkle of vivacity. Birdie did not know enough to "doll up." Her dejectedly drooping mouth and hurt brown eyes alone were enough to shut fast the door. Moreover, she could not dance, and she could not sing. Her body lacked rhythm and animation; her voice might have done in the Baptist Church choir, but in Chicago it was flat—absolutely flat. Managers refused her with polite curtness; none kindly offered to insult her.

So here was Birdie at the end of her first month in Chicago no nearer her untimely destruction than she had been at the end of the first day. For the fourth time she was going to have to listen to those hateful prayer-meeting songs, the same songs that were being sung in the little church at home this very evening—and she knew who would be carrying the tenor part. With hungry, sorrowful eyes Birdie stared at the only photograph on her dresser. It was the picture of a debonair young man with oily hair brushed back in a slick pompadour. The man's fixed smile

beamed back at her. Tears filled Birdie's eyes and distorted the youth's dashing smile into a grotesque caricature.

The girl grasped Perry Johnson's photograph and covered it with frenzied, passionate kisses. Then she threw herself on the bed and burst into wild sobbing. Birdie was not afraid to cry in Chicago. Nobody ever seemed to hear her, or, if they did, nobody ever seemed to worry about it. This was not the first time Birdie had cried over Perry's photograph. She had shed so many tears that she would need a duplicate pretty soon. A pasteboard photograph cannot stand very much soaking.

Tonight there was a deep sense of bitter defeat in Birdie's heart. It hardly seemed plausible that a girl could come to Chicago with the express intention of going to the dogs and not get a chance to do it. The thing was not logical; it went against the doctrines of the white-slave experts; it was in open violation of the magazines. Intuitively she realized that the trouble was not with the city. The city was here—gleaming lights, appealing music, painted women, pleasure-loving men, cabarets, and all. Other folks were going the pace. She had only to take a ride on the elevated around the loop to confirm the fact. There was nothing the matter with the city. The trouble must be with her. She did not know how to play the game. Still, she knew the rules—or thought she did. She wept softly into her warm pillow and went on trying to straighten out her problem. Weeping had become a habit with Birdie.

It was hot in the stuffy little bedroom, miserably hot; but she was glad of it. She wanted to be miserable, she wanted to be hot; the worse she felt, the better she liked it.

Four years' high school training and twenty-two years' experience in living, coupled with four long weeks of failure in Chicago, enabled Birdie to look at herself from a certain reasonable standpoint. Evidently her failure lay in the fact that she was a little too old to be ignorant, too comfortably fixed to be shabby and hungry; too innately decent to be loud and vulgar. But there was no use in worrying; tomorrow she would have to decide and adjust herself to one of the orthodox types. Yes, tomorrow she would do it.

Birdie's sobs had grown softer and more intermittent. Her breathing was slow and regular, her clenched hands relaxed. Yes, tomorrow she would begin all over again under different colors, she would try a new line of approach. Tomorrow would be a good time to decide, but not tonight—no, not tonight—there would be plenty of time—no use in hurrying—lots of time, all the time in the world—plenty.

Thus musing, Birdie's thoughts drifted on and on; her body lost its tenseness, and she was asleep. A couple of flies buzzed inquisitively over the bed. Birdie's limp hand shooed at them, but she slept on. Occasionally footsteps clattered down the hall and distant doors banged. The steady drone of street noises went on with unceasing regularity. Perry's photograph slid to the floor. Birdie slept in peace. Gradually the twilight shadows merged into the darkness of night.

Suddenly Birdie twitched uneasily.

Through the window was coming an unpleasant noise.

"Throw ou-out the Life Line—"

Birdie sat up with a start.

"Across the dark wa-wa-wave—"

"Damn!" ejaculated Birdie. She jumped up and viciously slammed down the window.

But still came the somewhat stifled refrain,

"Throw ou-out the Life Line—"

Birdie put her fingers to her ears. She buried her head in the damp pillows of the crumpled bed. With unrelenting persistency the song went on. Birdie lived through the whole four stanzas of it. Then she got up and switched on the electric light. The present lull only foreboded what was coming.

Birdie pulled at the hooks on her dress, she jerked it off and tossed the garment into a far corner. Then she

splashed a cool dash of water against her burning cheeks and aching eyelids. It took barely three minutes to retwist her hair and to slip into her daintiest dress. For the first time in her life she wore it without the guimpe which Ma had insisted upon having their sewing-woman make. Ma had not known how immodestly minus the frock was in the neck and sleeve line when they had picked it out in the ready-to-wear department of Plainsville's Big Store. "Just the thing for select musical recitals in the city" was the line of talk by which they had been inveigled into buying the wonderful pink chiffon creation. Tonight Birdie looked at her reflection in the mirror and pronounced it all right.

Birdie was going away. She was going somewhere, anywhere, just anywhere away from this hole of a room and that infernal church music. She grabbed her purse and shut the door behind her.

Out on the street, the coatless and hatless little figure in its soft, misty draperies started in the opposite direction from the stone church. She walked rapidly and heedlessly. Block after block was covered. Birdie did not know where she was going. She did not care.

An elevated train roared above her. Birdie turned, mounted the steps, paused at the ticket office, and then passed out toward the elevated platform. She stood still and waited. Several other people were waiting, too. The passive nearness of other human beings brought back to her her customary quiet air of aloofness. Nobody spoke to her; she spoke to nobody. The hot night air of the sweltering city languidly moved the countless folds of her chiffon dress. Birdie wiped her perspiring face and hands with her already damp handkerchief. She felt hot, and miserable, and desperate.

IV

A noisy string of elevated cars curved around the corner, swung along the narrow track toward the platform and stopped. Birdie entered the nearest car. It was half-filled. She sank into the first convenient seat. The train jerked and jolted, then started on its roaring way to somewhere. Birdie had ceased to think; she merely sat still in her uncomfortably hot cane-bottomed place and waited. Anything that wanted to happen could happen. She did not care. On and on rushed the rattling, banging elevated.

But even in big cities trains cannot go on forever. Suddenly, with a start, Birdie saw that she was in the heart of the city. She recognized the electric signs of the loop. At the next stop she got off. Down on the street the usual eight-o'clock crowd was on its way to the playhouses and music halls. Birdie walked a block or so. Still not a word had been addressed toward her. A few roving eyes casually noticed the slim, prettily gowned girl with soft brown hair smoothly drawn back from a mournful Madonna face. But no one molested her. There is a secret in the heart of the city that Birdie had not yet discovered. Men do not often speak to solitary women on the streets; they do not find it necessary; too many women speak to them.

Half a block away the scintillating lights of a big vaudeville house loomed up. Birdie directed her steps that way. The sultry August air smothered her; she felt faint and tired. Inside the vast theater the atmosphere was no better. The place seated a hot mass of perspiring spectators monotonously waving their programs back and forth in a united but ineffective effort to fan the close, stagnant air. A number of softly whirring electric fans only served to add to the general hopelessness of the attempt.

A white-aproned mulatto girl ushered Birdie to a seat. She shrank back into it and closed her aching eyes. An energetic orchestra was sending forth rapid blasts of defiant music upon the already heavily laden air. Soon through her lightly closed eyelids Birdie discerned the switching and shifting of

the electric lights. She opened her eyes upon a darkened opera-house and gleaming footlights.

Then in succession Birdie sat through an agonizing series of stunts. First came some moving pictures. A senseless rapid-fire discourse of song and dialogue between a very thin, worn-out, rundown man and a very fat, tightly corseted, loud-voiced woman followed. Then a trio proceeded to murder all the favorite old-fashioned songs in the standard old-fashioned songbooks. Next a man on a bicycle tried to demonstrate all the impossible ways to ride a bicycle. Immediately a Chinese quartette sang the national songs of every nation. At their painfully accurate rendering of "The Star-Spangled Banner" Birdie was glad to stand with the rest of the relieved audience and give her leather-upholstered seat a chance to cool off. But the respite proved of short duration. Another curtain was switched up, disclosing a newly-weds' parlor, and an injured wife and her scapegoat of a husband engaged in a twelve-minute word battle.

Birdie looked around the audience. It seemed to be a good-natured and indulgent mass of perspiring humanity. Birdie wondered if there was a single other soul in Chicago quite as miserable and unhappy as she was. But not another person in the house looked as if anxious to die right away. To sit through the whole performance was an ordeal for Birdie; but anything was preferable to the bedroom with the Wednesday-night prayer-meeting across the street.

Finally, in two or three hours, with a triumphant clashing of every instrument in the orchestra and a frenzied completion to an oriental dance on the stage, the asbestos curtain rolled down, and the show was over. Birdie arose and followed the crowd pushing along the packed aisle toward an exit. She had a sinking sensation of utter discouragement and despair. Now she wished the performance had gone on forever. True, the loathed prayer-meeting must be over; but Birdie dreaded to go back to her room. It meant facing the future—a future in which she already had acknowledged herself defeated. Birdie felt terribly alone and helpless.

There was a man's coat sleeve brushing against her bare arm. Birdie slipped her hand through the man's arm. Never in this world could she explain why she did it. She just happened to do it—that was all. The man turned, glanced indifferently at the fluffy, pink bit of girlish sweetness so near his elbow, shook her fingers off abruptly and continued on his way. Birdie swayed, she swallowed convulsively. She was stunned, not so much by the man's behavior as by her own action. The hot, uncomfortable crowd pressed impatiently on.

Birdie now felt a pudgy hand—the hand of another man—on her shoulder.

"Hello, girlie," breathed a tobacco-laden voice in her ear. "Give you the cold shoulder—well, I should say not! You're the chicken for me!"

Birdie gasped.

A man had confidentially grasped her arm, given it an understanding squeeze, and was starting to pilot her toward the exit. She wanted to speak, but could utter no sound. Mechanically her footsteps followed her escort's leadership. He kept close to her. Birdie's brain was making convulsive efforts to recover from its mental paralysis. Her reasoning powers fought to catch the situation. Here, here, right here, was her chance. This was the opportunity she had been hunting for a month. No, she must not try to get away, she must stick to this fellow. Fate had thrown the cards right into her hands; she must grab them.

The exit was reached. Birdie and her companion stepped out on the street. In a dazed way Birdie noticed the newsboys flourishing headlined papers in the air and howling their extras about the record-breaking heat of the day.

"Fifty-two heat prostrations! Hot-

test day o' year!" shouted a newsie.

Birdie felt unusually cool and calm. Cold perspiration stood on her brow.

"Hungry, little pet?" inquired the man.

Birdie vaguely shook her head.

They walked half a block in silence. Suddenly the girl stopped. She shook the man's hand from her arm.

"I—I—er—you don't understand—I'm a stranger in Chicago—I, why—"

Birdie looked hopelessly around. She wanted to escape. She had a desperate notion of taking to her heels and running.

"That's all right, girlie, I see—I'll take care of you—"

On an approaching street-car was the name of the street that was a block from Birdie's rooming-house. Birdie's eyes were fixed on the street-car. The man divined her intention.

"Of course, if you want to go home—if you don't want to have a good time—but I'd like to show you the town."

Birdie took a step, then hesitated. A good-looking young man with a sleeping baby on one arm was helping his pretty wife on the car. He stepped up after her. An angry wave of terrible bitterness swept over Birdie. She thought of Perry Johnson. She thought of the past miserable months. She stopped.

"No," said Birdie, "I don't want to go home—show me the town—I want to dance—I want something to drink."

The man looked at her. Then he hailed a taxi.

"I know a nice little cabaret place you will like—lots of dancing—lots to drink," he said, helping her into the car.

The taxi began to thread its way through the crowded loop district. Then it turned southward. Birdie felt the man's arm encircling her waist. She drew away and sat up stiffly in the far corner.

"Please, d-don't," she choked.

The man's arm relaxed.

The car moved steadily on. Its progress stirred up a warm breeze. Birdie sat very, very still. She felt queer. She wondered who she was, whether she really was herself or somebody else. And if she was somebody else, she wondered who this somebody else of herself was. Was she the person with a Ma and Pa and a little sister Midgie at home? She wondered if Ma had finished that quarter section of the bedspread yet, and if Pa was getting very many eggs just now.

All the time the taxi kept going on. Many other automobiles were going south; there was an endless string of them. The same kind of twinkling-lighted procession was passing in the opposite direction. Some twenty-odd blocks from the loop the taxi swerved, turned a corner and traversed several blocks along a cross-street. It drew up before the well-lighted entrance of a poorly lighted building. A colored porter opened the door. They entered. Before them stretched a vestibule with a center strip of red velvet carpeting. They followed along the red line.

"The road to hell—the road to hell—the road to hell—the road to hell—" ran through Birdie's brain over and over. She was quite calm. She knew what she was doing. She was no little sixteen-year-old fool.

"Yuah hat, boss—check yuah hat—"

"Right this way—hat checks."

V

Her escort waved the eager attendants aside, and strode around a corner at the right. Piano music was issuing from that direction. They passed through folding doors and were in a big, brilliantly lighted place. Birdie's eyes blinked. Sometimes in dreams she had had the sensation of struggling to see something and being unable to see anything—a sort of perplexing blindness. She experienced the same sensation now. Somebody, she couldn't exactly see who, was leading the way through tables and people—she guessed that was what it was—to a table. Her new friend guided her stumbling steps and after endless wiggling and squeezing through crowded spaces seated her

at a small table. Limp and trembling, Birdie leaned back in her chair.

"Pretty hot, eh?" remarked her companion. "Need a bracer—something to pep you up—right quick—". He turned toward the waiter and completed the order.

There was an omnipresent low buzz of conversation everywhere; glasses were clicking; people were laughing; from the other side of the room came the sound of a girl's voice raised in song. The waiter returned. The man pushed a cold glass of bubbling, sizzling, sparkling foam into Birdie's hand and helped her lift it to her lips. She took a big swallow.

"Heavens!" gasped Birdie with a choking shudder. The liquid was icily, stingingly unpleasant. She believed her throat was going to turn wrong-side out.

"Go on, go on!" laughed the man. "It will straighten you out all right—that's good stuff, that is."

And because his hand was holding the glass to her lips, and Birdie was too overcome to bother about resisting, she went on. She drained the glass.

"Not so bad, was it?" her escort asked. He raised another glass to his own lips.

Birdie smiled weakly. She did not reply. Her tongue was tingling; it was either frozen or scalded. The man continued drinking. Birdie looked interestedly around the room. The place was not exactly what she had imagined it would be. It did not quite conform to the impressions she had received from photoplays. Her roving eyes mutely took in the gay groups at the countless small tables arranged around the open dancing space in the middle of the room, the sweaty orchestra on the raised elevation at one end, a number of painted women hovering close to the piano, and then her gaze finally rested on the source of the vocal efforts from across the way.

A short, decidedly plump woman in silver-spangled mauve silk was moving from table to table on the outskirts of the vacant dancing area as she sang the lengthy verses of her lengthier song. Her body swayed in accentuated rhythm. Her arms were outstretched in pleading invitation in accompaniment to her statement "I'm looking for someone to love!" She was too plump, entirely too plump. Birdie reached that decision at the first glance. Occasionally someone tossed a coin toward the woman. Birdie was disgusted.

Her companion was refilling their glasses. As Birdie slowly drank her second drink, she examined the crowd more minutely. The tables were well filled. Waiters incessantly moved about with their ice-packed bottles. Even casual examination of the women revealed to Birdie one big reason why she had failed to get into the underworld before. Her appearance had been against her. Without exception every woman in the room was painted and dressed to the nth power. Of what avail had been Birdie's virtuous little dusting of talcum powder against the thick, age-proof enamel of this bunch? Also, their clothes were different, or rather they wore them differently.

Birdie began on her third glass and continued her scrutiny. Their faces were different. They expressed more life, more joy, more exhilaration. But now, did they? Was she the only person in the room concealing a broken heart? To be sure, wine and laughter flowed freely; but— Then Birdie began to pick out the haggard, drawn lines around the mouths, the hurt, despairing expressions in the eyes, and the defeated stoops to the shoulders. She found them on every side. The weight in Birdie's chest grew heavier.

The plump girl had ceased singing, and all heated and perspiring had retired to a convenient seat near the piano. A big placard bearing the announcement ONE STEP was stuck up in front of the orchestra. Then the music began. People pushed back their chairs and made toward the reserved dancing space. The one-step started. More than half of the tables were deserted.

Birdie stared in amazement. Last

winter, she, together with four other clerks from the Big Store, had paid a dancing teacher from Boston five dollars for six lessons on the latest dancing steps. They had been swindled. None of these folks were dancing as she had been taught to one-step. Moreover, no two couples were dancing in the same manner. Birdie's eyes opened wider and wider. Out on the dancing floor was a hot, squirming, writhing, closely packed mass of humanity. Birdie's eyes became fixed on a tall, skinny girl in a striped skirt. She was closely clasped in the arms of her fat, rotund partner. Birdie turned her head in disgust.

"Come on, let's dance—let's step it off," suggested Birdie's companion.

"It's—it's so hot—I'd rather not—let's don't," pleaded the girl.

"Oh, all right—sure, this *is* a hot sort of a hole, have a drink—"

Again the glasses were filled. The man seemed unable to quench his thirst. Birdie drank gratefully. Her fingers trembled. Tears filled her eyes. So this—this was what she had come to! This was the purgatory she had heard of! This was what she stood on the threshold of! She hoped Perry Johnson would feel satisfied and proud if ever he heard of her downfall. She was glad—glad—glad—glad that she was going straight to the devil. That's where she wanted to go. It was too hard to go on living.

Birdie watched an extremely decolletée-gowned girl assisting a very drunk old man to become a little bit more drunk. The girl had one arm around the wretch, her cheek rested against his shoulder. The man was maudlinly exhibiting his well-filled wallet. With curious satisfaction Birdie noticed that the woman appropriated every greenback in the wallet before she helped him put it away. Then she left the drunken one leering over a final glass of beer. The girl's face was bitter and cruelly hard as she slipped away from the old man's table. Birdie felt better. It did her good to see a woman get the better of a man.

The dance ended. Another girl, this time a scrawny one with a deep alto voice, took the floor and started executing another painful solo with accompanying gestures. The singer was dressed to look nineteen; Birdie was sure she was at least a year over thirty-five. Birdie covertly studied her escort. He was a heavy-set, middle-aged man with the stamp of dissipation all over him. He wore a dark blue suit and a massive gold watchchain. He seemed perfectly at home in his surroundings,, and even appeared on intimate terms with the waiters and many of the patrons. Birdie was beginning to experience a violent repulsion.

Also she was beginning to make a big, big discovery. She was not the only person in the world that had tried to drown a heartache in dissipation. There were dozens and dozens of broken hearts in this very room. Almost every woman here had her story—she displayed its title in the lines of her countenance. Birdie saw that she was only one out of many. She discovered that there had been a Perry Johnson in the lives of a large percentage of the derelicts here.

As for the men, Birdie didn't care, she passed them over. She knew they were a rotten, disgusting lot. She knew this was not the place to look for successful business men, trustworthy young men, skilled physicians, capable lawyers, and presidents of the United States. This was the bunch of unsuccessful "has-beens," the failures, the good-for-nothings, and the shirkers in life's battle. This was the bunch that would benefit the world by taking carbolic acid.

And Birdie knew that she belonged right here with the rest of the riffraff. This time she filled her glass herself.

It was hot—almost unbearably hot—in the place. Occasionally new arrivals with wet coats entered. They said it was raining outside and getting a little cooler, too. A flash of lightning once in a while confirmed the report. But the overheated, congested room showed no signs of cooling off. It was

past midnight. Nobody seemed disposed to depart; many were too drunk to depart without assistance. Birdie's dejection had left her—she didn't care what happened—she had cast her lot with these people—and she felt pretty good. She should worry!

Her eyes were sparkling; her eagerly parted lips were as violently red as if painted. It is a fine thing to drink enough to make you forget. Birdie had forgotten—or almost forgotten. And what she could remember didn't bother her, not one bit. Time passed. Birdie and her companion joined in the general dances; one-steps, fox-trots, pigeon-walks—all were the same to Birdie. Between times they rested at their table and endeavored to cool their parched throats. In solo form they heard all the latest rags, also they heard about everything else, even to "My Mother's Rosary" and "The End of a Perfect Day." Birdie drank anything and everything offered her. Life became a joke. The world struck her as ridiculously funny. This sure was the life.

VI

THE orchestra began to play an interlude.

Birdie's friend grasped a half-filled bottle. He shakily poured its contents into their glasses. Much of it splashed on the bare table.

"One more drink, my pet—we'll make a night of it, eh?—a night of it—"

"Yes," laughed Birdie, "we'll make a night of it—I don't give a damn—not a damn—not a—"

Birdie rolled the word around her tongue and dwelt upon it. She liked its sound.

"Some little sweetheart, you are," declared the man, placing an arm around her.

Birdie smiled and leaned a willing head against his shoulder. She finished her drink.

The orchestra was over the piece's prelude and had begun on the peculiarly sweet melody. Birdie's head kept time to the music. It bothered her. There was something strange about that music. It reminded her of something or other. That piece ought to have words—that's what it ought. Birdie tried to think of words to fit it. She engaged in a terrible mental struggle, but they would not come. The music continued.

Then for the second time in one night Birdie did an unexpected thing. She got to her feet. She knew what those words were. It was a shame to leave them out. Perry would not like it.

As the orchestra struck a certain chord, the slim, girlish figure in delicate pink edged around a couple of tables and stepped out into the big center space. Her lithe, slender body fairly radiated with the rhythmic measures of the music; her rich, vibrant voice lifted itself in song. The surprised orchestra faltered a moment, lost a measure, and then continued their playing. Clear as a bell, in tones of aching passion, came the words—

"Love, here is my heart,
One tender refrain;
Yours if you echo the tune,
Yours if you tire of it soon—"

The head-waiter started forward, then stood tense. The manager stared in amazement. The drunken audience sat up, electrified. Never before had anyone sung in this place with a voice like that. The tones were full of baffled longing and pain. There was infinite yearning in them. This sweet, pleading slip of a girl was the eternal heartache of the whole discouraged world personified. She seemed a frail, crushed flower exuding its wealth of priceless perfume. The drooping pink petals of her gown fluttered with the low throbbings of the violins.

"Whether you laugh, as you depart,
Or hear it again—"

Shivers crept down the backs of the spellbound listeners. Not a soul stirred.

"Something to listen to yet,
Or forget,
Here is my heart!"

The song was finished. The orchestra took up the melody in loud double crescendo and started to play it again. Birdie danced. She whirled, she swayed, she seemed as if blown by a storm; her filmy draperies wrapped and twisted and whirled out around her. She was a daintily poised fairy floating on transparent wings; her light feet barely touched the floor; her exquisitely molded body was a perfect slave to the music's dictates. Birdie, drunk, was performing what Birdie, sane, never could do. Had any musical directors been there, they would have fought to engage her on the spot; had any dancing directors been there, they would have killed each other in the attempt to get hold of her.

The orchestra's rash crescendo died down to a sorrowful wail. Birdie had retreated toward the edge of the space. She was near the big entrance door. A thunder of applause echoed through the room. The girl hesitated. The orchestra was repeating the soft refrain; so she took up the melody again. Her big, despairing eyes hypnotized the spectators.

"Love, here is my heart,
One tender refrain;
Yours if you echo the tune,
Yours if you tire of it soon—
Whether you laugh as you depart,
Or hear it again—
Something to listen to yet,
Or forget,
Here is my heart!"

Birdie again found herself close to the entrance. Still swaying with the music, at the last line she dashed through the open door, out along the vestibule with its red carpet, past dazed attendants, and through the outer door into the street. Rain was coming down in torrents. Birdie lurchingly ran down the block and stopped, panting, in a dark alley. She was drunk—and she knew it. Why she had dashed out of the place, she did not know. Perhaps she had got cabaret singing mixed up with vaudeville acting, and had thought she was making her exit from the stage.

Birdie leaned against a building and lifted her burning face to the cool rain. Her drenched chiffon dress clung to her wet skin. The chilling downpour had a sobering effect. A block away, through the rain, a dim row of taxis could be seen. They were lined up in front of the place from which she had recently emerged. Birdie was afraid to call a taxi. She did not want to be discovered. In the distance a street-car's light was making its way through the rain. The light was getting bigger and bigger; it was going in the direction of her rooming-place. Birdie fumbled in the bosom of her dress, pulled out her pocket-book, and tried to run toward the next corner. She staggered from one side of the walk to the other. The car stopped. The conductor helped her pull herself on. She lurched toward the first seat and dropped into it. There were plenty of other rain-soaked people on the car. There also were other folks on it in no better physical and mental condition than Birdie was. Street-cars at two a. m. do not bear an eleven p. m. class of passengers. The car rumbled and jolted. Birdie leaned her head on the wet window-sill. She felt sick, awfully sick. She thought the car would never reach her destination; and she must keep her senses and know enough to get off at the right place.

By gigantic efforts she managed to accomplish the task. The conductor helped her steady herself on the pavement. Then the street-car left her and she was all alone. She stumbled toward the curbing. The pelting rain drenched her. The big stone church stood as usual on the corner. Birdie was desperately sick. She staggered against the church. She wanted to die—she was sure she was going to die.

It was a long time before Birdie was able to continue up the block. It took

a long time to extract the elusive latch-key from her purse, and it took her an eternity to fumble up the endless steps to her room. Once there, she threw herself with a convulsive sob on the bed. The effects of the cool rain were disappearing. Birdie was drunk—dead drunk.

VII

NEXT morning the hot, streaming sunshine of ten a. m. beat on the closed window-pane, and fell in burning rays on the flushed face of the sleeping girl. Birdie turned over with a groan. But the sun continued to shine. Birdie struggled to her feet and opened the window. Her head was splitting.

"Oh!" she moaned. "Oh! Oh!" Then the bedraggled second vice-president of the Young People's Society dropped back on her bed.

Ten a. m. of the following day the sunshine again streamed into the little bedroom. It shone on a fresh, happy girl with sparkling eyes. She was deep in the mysteries of packing her trunk. Birdie's face wore the tranquil, animated expression of one at peace with the world. Her step was full of life and vigor. She whistled a gay little tune. In moving about her foot encountered a bit of pasteboard. Birdie stooped to pick it up. Then she looked long and hard at Perry Johnson's picture.

Her eyes twinkled. Her lips curved in good-natured scorn. So this was what she had tried to go to ruin over! This was what had almost finished her up! This insipid-mouthed, weak-chinned, brainless nut! Great heavens! What a little fool she had been! This —this was the idiotic simp she had considered big enough to break her heart.

Birdie threw back her head and laughed — laughed as she had not laughed for months. There was not a trace of irony in her voice. It was the whole-souled laughter of a healthy girl. It would take a mighty, mighty wonderful, big, all-around worth-while man to get Birdie excited again.

"It's a good thing I went on that drunk," Birdie chuckled to herself. "But it's a terribly good thing the Lord was on His job that night and got me home all right," she added with solemn earnestness.

Birdie tossed the photograph carelessly aside and went on with her packing. She was going home. It was not because she feared the big city. Birdie knew that she could take care of herself anywhere now. It was because there was an untrained, impulsive, flighty little sister Midgie at home. A Midgie who was growing up fast. So fast that Ma would never get her bedspread crocheted in time, and Pa would never get his chicken-pen fixed soon enough.

And as for Birdie, her heart was the least of her troubles. She did not know whether she had a heart or not, but she did know that she now had some good common sense—lots of it.

WHEN a woman no longer gets pleasure out of discussing her love affairs, she is old. When she refuses to discuss them at all she is too young to be trusted.

LOVE is a toothache. Marriage is a dentist of the old school.

WHEN THE WORLD IS YOUNG

By Helen Woljeska

SNOW.

The boy and girl walk through the crowded, brilliantly illumined streets. Arm in arm. Close to each other. And though the girl's suit is thin, and the boy has no overcoat, they seem more comfortable under their antediluvian cotton umbrella than the couple over there in their limousine. . . .

Before Vandervoort's they stop.

The Christmas display catches their attention: luxurious furs, costly gowns, sparkling gems.

"Just look!" she sighs ecstatically, "how beautiful!"

He bends his handsome, dark face towards her. "When I am rich, darling, you shall have all this!"

She laughs into his black eyes, tender and teasing. "But when will you be rich?"

"When I'm a famous artist!"

"Ah! but supposing I'm a famous artist first!"

"Then you won't need your Louis any more?" His face, rueful, is quite close to hers.

She grimaces. "No—no—unless I should be foolish enough—to still care for him—"

They leave the glaring shop window.

The antediluvian cotton umbrella is very low over their heads. . . .

The couple in the limousine look bored.

THE OLD VOICE

By Margaret Widdemer

WHAT shall I do with an old voice, calling in the distance,
The old voice, calling, calling, that I would not hear again?
What shall I do with my own heart, stealing to the window,
Stealing back to the foolishness, the sweet and grief and pain?

The fire on the hearth burns warm now, clear and still and steady,
Comforting me and keeping me, lighting me here at home—
Out where the old voice calls me old is the dark already,
How should I find and follow it, will-o'-the-wisp aroam?

Dream and the dark and song still, far over hill and hollow
(Stones for my feet and sharp thorns, wearisome path and sore)
Out there the old voice calls still. . . . Swiftly my feet must follow—
I must go out where the voice calls—I must go back once more!

DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?*

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Zoë Akins

CHARACTERS

AUSTIN SHELDON
HELEN, HIS WIFE
JOHN WARFIELD
CATES

TIME AND PLACE: The Sheldon's house on the night of a bal-masque.

NOTE: By the silvery chiming of an unseen clock, the audience is made aware of the exact time the incidents are supposed to occur. It is asked to imagine that the whole night, practically, passes as the play unfolds. Dark pauses assist in the illusion.

SCENE: A small study above the porte-cochere. The furnishings are simple, but very good. There is one entrance, a wide doorway at the back opening upon the landing of a great staircase; heavy sliding doors shut it out, however, at the beginning of the play. At either side of the writing-room is a large window overlooking the driveway beneath.

AT RISE: The clock outside is chiming midnight. AUSTIN SHELDON, *a man of about forty-five, in evening clothes, sits despairingly at a large flat desk placed well towards the center of the room. A domino, yellow with large black dots, lies on a chair where he has tossed it. An insistent knocking begins on the closed doors at the rear.* AUSTIN *rises, doubtful whether or not to answer. The knocking continues as he pauses.*

A VOICE OUTSIDE:

Austin. . . . It is only I, John.

AUSTIN:

(*Relieved, yet somehow disappointed —as if nothing matters.*) For God's sake, go downstairs with the others! Leave me alone.

[*In the distance—music begins for a dance.*]

A VOICE OUTSIDE:

(*After a pause.*) This won't do. Let me in!

AUSTIN:

(*Repeating.*) Oh, for God's sake . . .

[*But he obeys and lets the man in.* JOHN WARFIELD *enters; pauses a little uncertainly, and then closes the door behind him—not, however, until the music has come loudly into the room—and the brilliance of the light outside, contrasting strongly with the shadowy illumination within, from the two or three shaded lamps.* AUSTIN *is neither hospitable nor inhospitable.*

* All rights reserved.

He simply returns to his chair and leaves JOHN *unnoticed, who in turn divests himself with some relief of the red domino that he has worn.*]

JOHN:

(*Going to the window and opening it.*) It's disgustingly hot and smoky in here. Let's have some air.

[*Sounds from the driveway come up.*]

AUSTIN:

Put it down. There's too much noise.

JOHN:

In just a second. It will be quieter. now. The clock struck twelve a moment ago, and most of the people are here. There are only two motors drawing up.

AUSTIN:

But they're waiting everywhere. . . . The noise will keep up all night . . . and the damned music.

JOHN:

Most of the motors have turned back into the street to wait. . . . But I'll close this now. (*He shuts the window. There is a slight pause.*) I tell you, Austin, you ought to quit this nonsense and come down.

AUSTIN:

(*Finally.*) I'm through, by God. . . .

JOHN:

But . . . but it's hopeless to talk like that. You can't be through. There's no way out.

AUSTIN:

I'll think of one . . . if you'll get out and leave me alone.

JOHN:

No.

AUSTIN:

You're here tonight as a guest at my . . . my wife's ball. When I want to consult you legally, I'll go to your office or send for you. . . . Pardon me . . . of course I don't mean to be uncivil, John.

JOHN:

Oh, you're crazy tonight. I'll pardon anything. Say what you like. . . . (*A pause.* JOHN *continues slowly.*) But no man of your position can afford to do what you are thinking about. There's no way of divorcing Helen . . . and you're too important . . . you're too tied up with important affairs to make her divorce you. . . . You're mad to think of it.

AUSTIN:

There are times when I forget that there's such a thing as divorce. It's when I'm very sane and very considerate that I do think of it. . . . Good God! You never wanted to strangle a woman, did you?

JOHN:

I think I *will* get out. You're too unpleasant. After all, Helen's done nothing . . . except to be herself.

AUSTIN:

Yes, that's all . . . and she's the cruelest human being—man, woman or child—that walks the earth to-night. She's like a snake and a humming-bird and a peacock and a fish . . . anything but a woman. She's got to get out. I won't have her around any longer. That's final.

JOHN:

She is just the way she always was. She was just the same when you married her—selfish, I'll grant—cynical, cold, but dazzling in her way . . . and very beautiful.

AUSTIN:

(*Taking up a framed photograph from the desk.*) Look at this picture. I saw it before I saw her—fifteen years ago. I dreamed things about the girl in that picture . . . and I was enough a fool to trust in those dreams. Look at it.

JOHN:

(*Looking at it.*) Lovely . . . lovely . . . lovely!

AUSTIN:

Do you see . . . such childish eyes . . . such wistful lips . . . the gentleness . . . the pathos . . . the wonder of that face?

JOHN:

When was it taken?

AUSTIN:

Four years before I met her, when she was seventeen.

JOHN:

She's about thirty now? . . .

AUSTIN:

Thirty-two. . . . But she was just as she is now, as you say, when I married her . . . ten years ago, when she was twenty-two.

JOHN:

(*Still looking at the picture.*) What could they have done to this child . . . what happened to her soul? . . .

AUSTIN:

Now, you understand just how I was taken in. I believed the picture. . . . But it must have been a lie. . . . She never had a soul. . . . She never was *that* girl. . . . Good God, John! For years I've waited! I've watched. . . . I've even prayed. . . . She seemed willing enough to marry me. She went through it all in a very startled, guarded fashion—armed with her coldness, her wit, her selfishness, her meanness. . . . Oh, I've stood it long enough! I'm through!

JOHN:

Yes, I can see how you find it impossible to go on. And yet . . .

AUSTIN:

Five years ago, when her mother died, I said to myself that at last I should see Helen's tears. But she looked straight ahead . . . and said nothing. Not once did she weep, not once concern herself in any way. She read novels and designed black dresses. . . . As for children . . . you know how I have hoped for children; Helen scorns the idea . . . and that is the woman . . . the only woman . . . I've ever loved.

[*The door slides open and a beautiful, golden-haired woman in a Greek dress of silver and crystal stands just without the threshold. She carries herself superbly—as if at her shoulder were a quiver and an arrow. She looks as if she could never let anyone come close to her.*]

HELEN:

Austin!

[AUSTIN *and* JOHN *rise. Both face her with a certain hostility, but she is undisturbed.*]

AUSTIN:

(*Sullenly.*) Yes? . . .

HELEN:

(*Not noticing his mood.*) What an amiable host . . . deserting like this! But I think you and Mr. Warfield *might* go upstairs and make yourself useful to Mrs. Grandlee. Someone telephoned that her husband had been hurt, and perhaps killed, in a motor wreck, and they say that she's quite upset.

AUSTIN:

Good heavens! Dick Grandlee! When? Where?

HELEN:

I didn't ask. . . . I must go back to my guests, particularly since you are sulking again. Say whatever you like to Mrs. Grandlee for me . . . but get her out of the house before she spoils my party. Au 'voir. . . .

AUSTIN:

Wait a minute. . . .

HELEN:

But why?

AUSTIN:

I am your husband . . . and I . . .

HELEN:

My dear! Has my conduct ever suggested that I forget the fact?

AUSTIN:

Be decently serious.

HELEN:

'Ssh! 'Ssh! (*Sounds are heard outside—low voices and someone weeping.*) They're taking her away. That's Mrs. Grandlee now. . . . (*She listens.*) She's gone sooner than I hoped. I didn't really need to disturb you, after all . . . or to have disturbed myself. I'll go back.

AUSTIN:

You'll not leave this room until you hear what I have to say.

HELEN:

What delicately revolting possibilities your tone implies! Very well . . . say on, Austin. Do you mind if I smoke? And we must have something to drink.

[*She presses a bell, and then lights a cigarette. She is bored, but not disturbed. She sits half wearily, yet as if eager to be away—almost aflame with her own glittering, silly words.*]

Do you know, it isn't so stupid, after all, to have a quiet domestic scene in the midst of a costume ball? It's like slipping into one's peignoir for ten minutes. Being quarreled at by one's husband is so restful . . . and the presence of one's husband's lawyer adds a certain piquancy. I'm always being quarreled at, but seldom by Austin—usually by other people's husbands. Do you know, Austin, that Tommy Lindsay has been making desperate love to me? Please kick him out. He's threatening to commit suicide. Fancy his coming here to do it and getting us all into an impossible mess!

[*The servant appears. She speaks to him.*]

Some champagne, Arthur, here, instantly.

[*The servant bows and withdraws. She goes on.*]

Speaking of suicide. . . .

[*Suddenly* AUSTIN *lifts a revolver from his desk and stares at it with a sort of desperate amusement. She pauses, then continues evenly.*]

Are *you* going to try it, Austin? I never thought *you* so romantic.

[*The servant again enters and serves the champagne.* AUSTIN *lays the revolver back in the drawer. She changes the subject sharply.*]

Every fat woman in town has come in an Oriental costume tonight. The floor is crowded with harem beauties. You should see your cousin Lucy, Austin. It's the poor dear's first, last and only appearance as a syren of the Nile. Well, she only weighs two hundred pounds—so, of course, she's very roguish in trousers! (*The servant goes out.*) Well, Austin, aren't you going to shoot yourself, after all?

AUSTIN:

(*Playing with the subject, half ironically, half seriously.*) Would it matter to you?

HELEN:

It really would. I should have a dreadful time with my suitors. They love me for myself alone now . . . and if you were dead, Austin, think how their passion would grow for your rich as well as beautiful young widow. . . . Please don't! I can't bear to think of being left to face them alone.

AUSTIN:

I'll not die . . . not tonight. . . . But I'm going to do something that will matter a great deal more to you. . . . We are going to be divorced.

[*Her unbelieving laughter answers him sharply.*]

HELEN:

You've been hysterical for a week, my dear. You should see a doctor.

AUSTIN:

You are my disease, Helen.

HELEN:

But evidently I'm not chronic. . . . Is that the trouble? (*No answer. Presently, draining her wine, she turns to Warfield.*) And you, Mr. Warfield,

what have you to say about this? You're the legal adviser, I believe. I suppose you expect to find it amusing and profitable—managing this affair successfully . . . if Austin is serious?

JOHN:

We won't discuss my part in it, and I'm afraid he is quite serious. . . .

HELEN:

In that case, au revoir. . . . Do whatever you like, Austin, but I assure you that, unless there's some special law for getting rid of model wives, you'll be put to lots of trouble. Naturally, I don't want a divorce. Not even to please my possible rival. . . . I take it you're in love with somebody? (*He does not answer. She rises and turns about superbly.*) I should never dream of interfering with you and her—but she evidently hasn't any tact or taste. She wants my place. . . . I don't know how she's going to get it. I don't mean to give it up. A divorce is quite upsetting — even among my friends. There's always some talk and I *will not have a scandal.* . . . That's final. . . . Good night, my dear. . . .
[*She goes out.*]

JOHN:

I'm afraid that's final, Austin.

AUSTIN:

I hate her! I hate her!
[*He takes up the picture and speaks to it.*]
You lied to me!
[*The room grows dark. . . . The clock strikes two, and the room grows light. The men are sitting just as they were.*]

JOHN:

It's two, old man. Go up and try to sleep. We'll go over this tomorrow.
[*He rises.*]

AUSTIN:

I tell you it's got to be done, somehow. . . . Well, good night, John. I suppose you'll be going home now. I'll telephone you at your office in the morning.

JOHN:

Good night. Don't come down.

AUSTIN:

I won't. . . . That damned music will keep up until day I suppose. Good night.

JOHN:

And brace up. . . .
[*He goes out.* AUSTIN *busies himself with arranging his desk.* CATES *enters smoothly, dressed as a waiter. He turns his attention from collecting the glasses, stops sharply, and comes close to* AUSTIN.]

CATES:

(*Insinuatingly.*) You're Mr. Sheldon?

AUSTIN:

(*Shortly.*) Yes.

CATES:

Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I've something that might interest you greatly.

AUSTIN:

Who are you?

CATES:

One of the extra men in to serve, sir.

AUSTIN:

Well, what is it?

CATES:

Waiters know a great deal, sir. . . . And we're paid very poor.

AUSTIN:

What do you want? I can't listen all night.
[AUSTIN *is ready to go.*]

CATES:

Oh, Mr. Sheldon, sir . . . just a minute, or you'll be sorry.

AUSTIN:

Well? . . .
[*He half turns back.*]

CATES:

I'll hurry, sir. . . . There's something I've got, sir, that you'd like to have. At least, there are those who would like to have it . . . and they pay very well, sir.

AUSTIN:

What are you? Who are you? What are you doing here? Trying to hold me up? Well, get out this instant!

CATES:

I'll go, sir, without being ordered. It was only to do you a kind turn that I spoke. . . . And Miss Helen. . . . I know it's wrong, sir, but I owe more to myself and my own family than to you or to her, sir.

AUSTIN:

(*Thickly.*) What . . . what about her? Are you speaking of my . . . of Mrs. Sheldon?

CATES:

If I have your permission to explain, sir.

AUSTIN:

Explain. . . .

CATES:

I was the butler for Miss Helen's mother for years, sir.

AUSTIN:

Go on.

CATES:

And I knew a great deal, sir; but one of us knew what I learned after. . . .

AUSTIN:

You'd better talk quickly. . . .

CATES:

She kept a sort of journal once, which fell into my hands, sir. . . . Of course, you may know what I know, but it's very few that would ever guess it, sir—and there are people that would pay a great deal, I am told, to have the story in black and white. I don't mean on account of the scandal, sir, though that would be worth a great deal in itself . . . but it's such beautiful reading. It would make a very fine book, just the way it stands. She wrote it all down so natural, sir. . . .

AUSTIN:

Have you . . . this journal of my wife's . . . here?

CATES:

Yes, sir.

AUSTIN:

And you think I'd like to buy it? . . .

CATES:

I know there are those who would, sir.

AUSTIN:

Is it quite complete? . . .

CATES:

It's all there—from the time she met the young gentleman, sir, to a year or more later, sir . . . when her baby died, and that, as she may have told you, sir, was a year before she had ever met you, sir. And she was so young. . . . I'm sure you forgave her yourself when she told you about it, sir.

AUSTIN:

What is your price?

CATES:

It's worth . . .

AUSTIN:

Tell me . . . straight out.

CATES:

Five thousand dollars, down, sir.

AUSTIN:

Will a check do?

CATES:

Being as I have letters proving what I have to say, sir—some of hers to him that was never mailed—I'll accept a check, sir. I trust there'll be no trouble about cashing it?

AUSTIN:

And the letters?

CATES:

Another five thousand, sir.

AUSTIN:

Keep them until your check is cashed. Then bring them tomorrow afternoon at five.

CATES:

Yes, sir.

AUSTIN:

I haven't said what I'll give for them. . . .

CATES:

We'll agree, sir, I feel sure. You would like me to bring the little journal now? While you make out the check, sir?

AUSTIN:

Yes . . . get it. As you go for it, ask Mrs. Sheldon to come here. Of course, she must identify it. . . . The check will be ready. . . .

CATES:

Yes, sir. . . .

[*He goes out.* AUSTIN *picks up the picture and stares at it.* JOHN *comes to the door, his overcoat on.*]

JOHN:

(*Looking in.*) Haven't you gone up yet, Austin?

AUSTIN:

Not yet. And don't go for a while. I'll want you later.

[*He speaks with bitter elation.*]

Something very strange has happened, old man. You wouldn't believe it. I can't myself, quite!

[*He takes up the picture.*]

She did lie! Oh, she fooled me all right. She's fooled me for years. But I'm free now—free and cured!

[HELEN *comes into the room as if a little spent from dancing.*]

HELEN:

What can you possibly want now, Austin?

[*She turns, dismissing* WARFIELD *very obviously, but gracefully.*]

Are you going, Mr. Warfield? So charming of you to have come. The débutantes adored your romantic gray hair. Good night.

[WARFIELD *bows to her and withdraws, but not until he and* AUSTIN *have exchanged an understanding look.*]

HELEN:

(*Continuing.*) Well, Austin?

[*She is impatient.*]

AUSTIN:

I'll explain in a minute.

[*He finishes writing and blotting the check. She wanders over to the desk and looks on curiously.*]

HELEN:

Cash. . . . Five thousand dollars. Anyone can cash that, Austin.

AUSTIN:

Yes . . . anyone can. . . .

[CATES re-enters. HELEN *glances at him carelessly.* AUSTIN *rises and goes toward* CATES.]

AUSTIN:

(*Continuing.*) Come here, Helen; will you identify this book? I don't want to pay five thousand dollars for an autobiography that is not genuine. Is this yours? If this fellow has the goods on us, we've got to pay his price.

CATES:

You don't remember me, do you, Miss Helen?

[HELEN, *after one keen look at him, has turned marble for an instant. But, as always, she is at her ease.*]

HELEN:

Certainly. . . . Your name is Cates. You were once our butler—the one who stole my mother's diamonds.

CATES:

I was acquitted of that unfortunate charge at a fair trial, Miss Helen.

HELEN:

I believe you were . . . acquitted. . . . Yes, this is my private history, Austin. You might as well . . . buy it.

[*She holds out her hand for the book, but* CATES *takes it to* AUSTIN.]

CATES:

It is the gentleman who's paying, Miss. I'll give to it him.

AUSTIN:

Give it to Mrs. Sheldon, Cates.

CATES:

Yes, sir. . . . The check, sir.

[*He takes the check.*]

AUSTIN:

That is all. . . . The letters tomorrow at five.

CATES:

Yes, sir. . . . Good night, and thank you, sir. I am glad to have been able to interest you, sir.

HELEN:

One minute, Cates. Why didn't you bring this to me instead of to my husband, if you wanted money? And why did you wait so long before blackmailing us?

CATES:

That's a hard word, Miss Helen. But I had my reasons. I've never forgot what you swore at the trial about your mother's diamonds, though I forgave you long ago. As for not coming sooner—well, your hand was difficult to read, Miss Helen, and I never guessed that there'd be more in this innocent-looking little book and certain letters that I'd come across than there was in the rest of the truck that came out of your desk. Rather silly truck, if I may say so, Miss Helen—poems and letters from your cousin Dora, mostly, but all very innocent and silly to me. It was only the other evening, when I was cleaning out an old trunk and feeling lonesome-like, that I come across this book, and for the sake of entertaining myself got to reading it, even though your hand was somewhat difficult. . . . Is that all, Miss?

HELEN:

That is quite all, Cates.

[*She inclines her head. He takes rather cringingly his dismissal, and goes out. She stands, the book in her hand, a bitter smile on her lips. Her husband sits, waiting, and watching her.*]

AUSTIN:

Well? . . .

[*She turns the leaves and then looks up—first soberly, then cynically, and again at the book.*]

HELEN:

Yes, my hand was a bit difficult . . . but . . .

[*She reads in a hard voice.*]

"I know now how Mary felt when she saw the angel that told her she should bear a son." . . .

[*She looks up, startled, moved. She meets her husband's eyes.*]

HELEN:

(*At last.*) Did . . . it . . . really happen? . . .

AUSTIN:

(*In pain. Furiously.*) I wouldn't have believed it . . . no. . . . I wouldn't have believed it! Why didn't you tell me? . . .

HELEN:

(*Quietly.*) I took a sporting chance on your never finding out. . . . Well, of course, you can divorce me on your own terms now. . . . But it doesn't matter, really. . . . Keep this record of my very romantic past, or throw it in the fire—whichever you like. But the divorce is settled. I agree to anything, necessarily. . . . Good night.

AUSTIN:

Wait. . . .

HELEN:

After all . . . one has to stand at the door and say good night to one's guests . . . and since you deserted . . .

[*She does not finish.*]

AUSTIN:

Wait. . . . Sit down.

[*She sits down. He picks up the book and stares at it. Then he takes it over to her. He speaks thickly.*]

Read me . . . more . . . you read it. . . .

HELEN:

(*Taking the book.*) If you insist.

. . . I am at your mercy, of course.

[*He stands by the window, his back to her, looking out. She tries to begin and falters. He turns back.*]

AUSTIN:

Begin. . . .

HELEN:

Where? . . .

AUSTIN:

Any place. . . . Go on.

[*He turns back. She begins presently in a curiously detached voice.*]

HELEN:

Very well . . . at the beginning, then, as is proper.

[*She reads.*]

"I cannot sleep. I have such a wonderful feeling in my heart. . . . And I must take it out and put it somewhere else, or my heart will break with it. . . ."

[*She looks up.*]

I think I'll skip the whys and wherefores, Austin. Even an injured husband would find them tedious—particularly all these details about my cousin Beatrice's wedding. You can't be interested at this critical moment in knowing that I had a pink frock and my hair turned up for the first time . . . or that Dora was her sister's maid of honor, and for once looked almost pretty.

[*She is referring to the book and turning pages.*]

AUSTIN:

Read, please. . . .

HELEN:

I'm rather curious myself, but not in the preliminaries.

AUSTIN:

Give the book to me if you won't . . .

HELEN:

But I will. . . . I'll begin at once. . . . I couldn't think of letting you go through it yourself. You'd be swearing every instant. I never crossed my t's or dotted my i's, and the n's and m's are extraordinarily like mere wriggles.

[*She glances up, sees his frown, and begins to read again, at random.*]

"He loves me. He trembled when he kissed me. A bird was singing somewhere in the darkness. . . . There were tears in my eyes . . . it was all so beautiful. When I said to him: 'No man ever kissed me before,' he closed his eyes an instant and said, 'How wonderful.' Oh, it is wonderful . . . wonderful to have waited for him. And now that he has come . . ."

[*She breaks off desperately.*]

I can't read any more of this nonsense.

AUSTIN:

(*Immovably.*) Go on, I say.

HELEN:

(*Continuing, but evidently skipping a page or two.*) "Today Dora and I were looking at Beatrice's wedding things while they were being put away. When no one saw me, I tried on her veil. . . . It made me shy to see myself in the mirror, and after a long moment I took it off and went and hid in my room. It is such a wonderful room, quite different from my rather shabby one at home. And Dora can have anything she wants. It seems almost wrong to be as rich as Uncle Julien when so many, many people are poor. Tonight I would go on my knees to wash the tired feet of beggars . . . and before I knew him I never felt quite like this. . . . I am so humble, yet God knows I am too proud. I feel like a Queen whose crown is a little heavy. He is Eros who has come to awaken me from sleep. I will never question him or doubt him. Psyche lit a lamp that she might see the face of her love—and, of course, that was very wrong. Love casts out fear, and I am afraid only of being unworthy."

[*Much moved, her voice breaks. She cries out.*]

I can't read any more! . . .

AUSTIN:

More . . . more. . . .

HELEN:

[*Recovering herself, turning several pages, as if she cannot go on with*

what is written. Suddenly she catches his eyes fixed upon her, and begins again in a low voice.]

"He calls me his wife. . . . Already he says I belong to him. He . . ."

[*Her voice trails off as the room grows dark. The clock chimes four, and the room grows light.* HELEN, *hunched forward in her chair, is reading desperately.* AUSTIN *listens with his head bowed—stern and motionless.*]

HELEN:

"I sit in this little room and wait and wait and wait. The city crowds about me—this strange city in which they have hidden me . . . No, I shall never forgive mama. She has not once thought of me, except to hate me. She thinks only of the scandal . . . of people finding out. But she cannot really hurt me. No one can ever hurt me again. For I died . . . The night they told me he was to marry Dora . . . I died . . . I don't know how it was that my sight and my hearing and my pain came back. But they lifted me from where I had fallen, and after that I saw them about my bed, as one who is dead might watch from a coffin . . . Then after I knew what was to happen to me . . . I was born again. The pain and the bitterness went. I crept to the window and sobbed with a strange, broken sort of joy . . . and in the darkness, under the stars, I made peace with his memory. Yes . . . he is forgiven . . . for I know now how Mary felt when she saw the angel that told her she should bear a son . . . I wait and wait and wait in this little room . . . and today he is being married to Dora, because she is so rich, mama says. When baby is born and old enough . . ."

[*She pauses and stares straight ahead, as if seeing ghosts. Austin rises and turns sharply away. Suddenly he speaks harshly from his place beside the window.*]

AUSTIN:

Come, more . . .

[*She lifts the book as he suddenly opens the window as if for air. The voice of a servant calling out the motor numbers, and the rumble of the cars, come up. The room grows dark, then light; she is still reading.*]

HELEN:

"For a long time, for days and nights, I lay as if at the bottom of a deep well. But angels were about me. Their wings shone in the darkness, and far above me there was light. And again I seemed to go out in a little boat on a dark sea, but the angels came and carried me gently back—back to the shore . . . Now I am here—swept up like a wreck from the waves—alone, alone. I thought nothing could ever hurt me again, but oh the waste, the awful waste! The pain like a battle; the fever like a blood-red mist! And then the terrible peace, and the empty place at my side, and the terrible, terrible tears! They made it a little grave somewhere, but no one will tell me where . . . If I go on and on and on I shall be a very wicked woman, for I shall bury my heart in a secret grave that none shall ever find . . ."

HELEN:

(*She pauses.*) That is all . . .

[*She rises weakly. He comes to her and holds out his hands. He is trembling. The dawn is at the window, gray and bare.*]

AUSTIN:

It's so wonderful!

[*His arms are about her.*]

So that is what they did to the girl I loved.

HELEN:

(*In a whisper.*) Austin . . .?

AUSTIN:

Darling . . . darling . . . did it really happen?

HELEN:

(*Suddenly sobbing, as if set free.*) Thank God, Austin, it *really* happened!

[*She clings close to him as . . . .*

THE CURTAIN FALLS]

THE IDEAL MAN

By Elinor Maxwell

1. He appeals to you at times as being "just a 'ittle boy, after all," and he takes to your mothering like a schoolgirl to a chocolate *parfait!* He's just a trifle amused over your baby talk, but he devours it just the same!

2. There are moments, though, when *you* like to be the baby, and have him say, "Well, I must take this kiddie home. It's time for little girls to be in bed!"

3. You are quite mad about him when he wears a soft collar and has just had his hair cut.

4. He's had a past, he possesses a future, but the present must be *yours.* You don't like to think a man is really "bad and bold." Still, *au contraire,* no amateurs need apply! You hope he was just a little wicked—*until he met you,* but that he's altogether different now!

5. His breath is never "tobaccoy." It's so repulsive to have your complexion all mussed up! Nicotine and rouge do not Mocha and Java!

6. You love, though, to see him puff at a cigarette, his eyes narrowed to slits, the Pall Mall, between puffs, hanging listlessly between his fingers. Some horrid mysterious woman whom he met on board the *Mauretania,* the summer before the war, gave him his cigarette case. It is very flat and gold. You always sort of *wonder* about that woman!

7. He likes to eat, and he eats a lot, but he orders in such good taste—talking to the waiter in low, confidential tones that seem to exclude you from the consultation.

8. You feel like kicking him if he is bossy to a servant. It makes everybody concerned so undesirably conspicuous, and it embarrasses you, but how secretly charmed and awed you are if the *maitre d'hotel* greets him with a salaam and the bus-boys call him by his name.

9. He never says "My God!"—but an occasional "Oh, damn it all!" below the breath, and just loud enough for you to hear, is most engaging!

10. He never smells of perfume, and you'd die if you thought there was a bottle of "Mary Garden" on his dresser. Still, you love that faint fragrance which reaches you when he bends over you, and which can *only* come from the use of violet-water after shaving.

11. His nails look as if they had been filed and the cuticle is just as it should be, but you never know for sure that he has enlisted the services of a manicurist. There's always the danger of his falling in love with the creature!

12. His nose never shines! A woman hates a shiny masculine countenance.

13. He bends over you in a positively caressing manner when you are talking in public places, so that the innocent bystanders think he's gone clear off his hinges over your beauty and charm, but you yourself never feel really, quite, perfectly, absolutely sure of him. "Treat 'em mean, and keep 'em keen" is a good motto for a man.

14. His shoes are flat and long and narrow, and never, under any consideration or circumstance, are they anything but laced.

15. He loves the Russian dancers and raves over the Bakst coloring, but the "Hula-Hula" nauseates him. He's sick unto death of greasy, fat hussies who wiggle their hips and wriggle their arms!

16. He wears soft silk shirts, the sleeves of which come nearly half-way

over his hand (nothing is so unattractive as a beefy arm emerging boldly and brazenly from a tweed sleeve), and a fat and rather chunky-looking ring graces the small finger of his left hand.

17. He never tells you that you aren't exactly *pretty*, but that you have ah, *so* much *magnetism*. He's likely to get his passport handed him if he makes a *faux pas* like that! You already *know* you've got Theda Bara backed off the boards when it comes to vamping, and you have always *secretly* thought that you were *decidedly* good-looking!

18. And last, but not least—in fact, most important of all—he never, no, never (notwithstanding an inclination which probably nine men in ten some time or other harbor), he never calls you "girlie"!

WILD ROSE

By John Russell McCarthy

WHEN she is just sixteen, and you and she
Have had your swim at dawn and then together
Have walked an hour over open fields,
Chattering like the blue-birds at their breakfast,
And then have stopped before the little door
That talks to you of eggs and good crisp bacon—
Have stopped before the door and glanced again
Back over the smiling lake and over the fields—
And then when you half turn and see her eyes
(You have the mood then, when you see her eyes)
And see her firm cheeks with their morning pink—
The wild rose has no secret from you then.

THE UGLY WOMAN

By Ninna May Smith

A WOMAN passed me in the crowded street
Today; a woman beautiful and wise;
She smiled a scornful smile for me to see.

. . . . . .

I hid my tears and moved on aching feet;
And then a man looked in my ugly eyes—
I thought perhaps he saw the soul in me.

SATURDAY

By Thyra Samter Winslow

IT was Saturday, and Maud McDonald was lonesome. She had been lonesome for a long time, now, but each day it seemed to her she grew lonesomer. This was her lonesomest day.

Saturday was always a lonesome day. On other days there were necessary things to do, necessary business things, pleasant business meetings, a feeling of satisfaction over work well done. All week, Saturday seemed a pleasant goal to look forward to—a half holiday with a whole holiday following it. Saturday night—one could stay up late with no dread of an alarm clock afterwards. And yet, when Saturday came, the bubble of anticipation burst without even a flicker of color. Nothing happened.

This Saturday was a beautiful day, far too beautiful a day to be lonesome in. It was a sunshiny day in early fall. Not summer sunshine, too white, too dazzling, but a soft, yellowed sunshine with the wind just blowing enough to make shirts fly pleasantly and to make the smells of pleasant, outdoor things more intense.

Maud wasn't out of doors. She sat in her little room, trying to decide whether she should go out or whether she should stay in and read. There wasn't anything she really cared about reading. All of the magazines she bought had been finished and there weren't any new ones in that she cared about. All week Maud was busy in an office, taking dictation, writing letters and answering questions and waiting for Saturday afternoon—and now that it was here—

Don't feel too sorry for Maud because she was a working girl. Feel sorry for her, if you want to, because she was lonesome, but not because she worked. She didn't mind it at all. She had a good job, and she knew it. Her's was none of these six dollar a week jobs that statisticians worry about planning how a girl can buy a pair of shoes every six months and still be able to eat dinner the nights before pay day. Maud received twenty dollars a week and she had good reason to think she would get a raise in a month or two. And she knew she deserved it. For she could take dictation steadily and well, without asking "What was that you said?" and "I didn't get that last," every minute or so. And then, from her notes she could produce clean, tailored letters that any firm could be proud of. She knew the answers to any question about anything that had happened in the office in the last six months.

Most surprising of all, Maud's boss was no smooth-speaking masculine, all ready to take her out to dinner and insult her with the dessert. Maud's boss was a woman and her name was Torrens and she was forty-five and machine-like, and she approved of Maud. When days were full she kept Maud busy every minute. Other days, "Hadn't you better read for a little while, or rest, or take a walk and do some shopping for half an hour or so?" she would say. It was Miss Torrens, herself, who had hinted about the next raise. Above Miss Torrens was the Real Boss, and he didn't have dinner-invi-

tation proclivities, either. His name was Brown and he had a wife and three children and, apparently, was most unromantically fond of all of them. Not that Maud was looking for romance—in the office. She wasn't. She would have been terribly hurt if Brown had said anything unnecessarily personal, though he never did. But when one is twenty-four and efficient and wide awake, it's not a bit pleasant to be lonesome nearly every minute that you aren't busy.

All day long, while at work, Maud was happy and busy and contented, but in the evenings she was just plain lonesome. If she had made less money, or more, she might have had a better time of it. There are so many things arranged for the girl with a small salary, church meetings, "lonely clubs," lectures, musicales. But somehow none of these quite suited Maud. She was from a small town and had gone with nice small town people. She wasn't a snob exactly, but the girls she met at the affairs given for The Working Girl used uncertain English and wore clothes unpleasant as to cut, color and fragrance. Maud felt sorry for them and sympathetic and all that, and if she had had more money—but they really weren't the kind of girls she cared about going with. She would have liked to have known efficient, wide awake young women who had regular, life-sized thoughts occasionally, but that kind seemed hard to meet by accident. They didn't go in crowds or attend social center meetings. She didn't meet any young men either, and although she liked to read and borrowed books regularly from the public library and bought a lot of magazines, reading isn't always entirely satisfying.

Maud's rooming house was a pleasant enough place, a "made over" house that had been, years ago, a lovely home, but now it and its fellows formed a trim, decent row, each with a neat "furnished rooms" sign in the window. The landlady did not snoop around as landladies are supposed to do, sniffing for gas used out of hours. She was a neat, thin, self-respecting landlady who tried to keep the rooms clean and who kept out of the way most of the time. Maud's room had white, frilly curtains and the bed folded up and looked like a couch during the day, so that she could entertain her company there—if there had been any company.

The rooming house did not offer much companionship. Maud had a nodding acquaintance with a tall, elderly man who sold teas. She spoke occasionally to a fat, motherly looking woman whose husband was "on the road." She entertained and called upon, at infrequent intervals, Miss Rosella Burrell, who sold hats.

Rosella knew nothing except hats, but she talked pleasantly enough about them, and of herself and of her young man; they had been going together a year now. He was a pale young man with an almost invisible mustache and they might get married by spring, perhaps. Rosella gave Maud "a price" on hats and admired Maud's taste in clothes, though she admitted that she had considerable taste, herself. Rosella worked in a most exclusive hat shop and she and Maud discussed clothes and "class" and things like that. Outside of clothes, Maud had little to talk to Rosella about, and although Rosella returned her calls with alarming promptness—her room was just two doors down the hall—Maud saw her very seldom.

Maud knew about some of the other roomers in the house, too. There were an elderly couple, two young women who sold some sort of facial preparations and roomed together, a Solomon-in-all-his-glory young woman who had frequent engagements with various young gentlemen who called for her in automobiles, and a young man who roomed directly above Maud. Maud had never seen this young man, though she may have

passed him in the halls—they were not very light. She heard him walkink around over her head—he seemed to be home quite a lot in the evening, and she knew his name was Morton for she saw letters addressed to him lying with the other mail on the front hall table, and the landlady spoke of him as young Mr. Morton, and said, "I'll have to introduce him to you, Miss McDonald," but she never did. Still, if she did know him, she felt he'd probably be just like the other people she met, stupid and dull and uninteresting. How she longed to meet someone who really knew something—anything. Oh, well, it is pretty hard to meet people when you are all alone in a city.

II

MAUD looked over the library book she had brought home a couple of days before. It looked decidedly stupid, so she thought she'd take a walk and get another one, might as well do that as anything. She put on her tailored suit, quite plain but absolutely correct, copied by a little side street tailor from a most exclusive model, added her smart plain hat, grabbed her purse and her library book and started out.

She decided to walk down Lake Shore Drive and through Lincoln Park. It was a long walk and her favorite one. On Lake Shore Drive she could see real people, people who amounted to something, probably, smartly dressed couples sauntering along, becomingly-uniformed nursemaids with white, antiseptically-treated babies, correct, pleasant looking young girls and indifferent, well-groomed young men.

Maud walked briskly along now, wishing she knew someone, any one of the people who passed her. How did a person get acquainted in a city, anyhow? Unless you know some one to start you, it seemed you don't get started at all. When Maud came to Chicago she knew three people, a middle-aged couple who had had her out to their apartment on the South Side to dinner a couple of times and a young man who worked in a drug store. The young man told jokes he had heard in vaudeville the week before and he was going with a girl who worked in the glove department of a State street department store, so he had little time for Maud, anyhow.

Of course Maud knew that the people who lived along Lake Shore Drive were millionaires, and some of them who merely walked along the drive were, too. Wouldn't it be splendid to be really rich? Maud put up her head haughtily and spoke, under her breath, to an invisible maid:

"No, Jimson, I will wear my blue this evening. And do my hair very low, but a bit firmer. Last Thursday, at the opera, it became annoyingly loose."

A young man, in a new suit of grey, flipping a tan stick, came down the steps of one of the Lake Shore Drive homes. Maud held her breath when she saw him. He was exactly the kind of a young man she liked. She liked his broad shoulders, the way he wore his hat, everything about him. If she only knew him now.

Maud had always considered it quite a low thing to flirt with strangers on the street. She considered herself far above that sort of thing. Still—she never did get to meet anyone. If she dropped her purse now—

There was only a minute, anyhow. The young man came down the steps of the house, down the walk, and reached the sidewalk just as Maud passed the house. They almost ran into one another. The young man paused a second to let her pass—they were going in the same direction, evidently—when Maud's purse dropped out of her hand. She had dropped it purposely, of course—and yet—even to her it seemed—almost—accidental.

The young man stooped to pick up the purse. Maud, embarrassed, now that the purse was dropped, started

to stoop, too—and then the book dropped. That—at any rate—was an accident.

They both laughed. Maud liked the way the young man laughed, a deep laugh. He threw his head back.

"How stupid of me," said Maud.

"How convenient for you that I'm here," laughed the young man.

"If I had any more things to drop, I'd drop them, I know," Maud said.

"Better drop them now, then, while I'm prepared."

Almost unconsciously, as if they had been together before, they were walking along, side by side. The young man handed Maud her purse. He was carrying the book.

"I may walk with you?" he asked.

"You are, aren't you?" asked Maud.

"I am—and I shall, then, if you'll let me," said the young man.

He opened the book.

"Like it?"

"Terribly stupid. I couldn't read it, even. I had read something else of his," she named it, "and I thought this might be good. It's an awful thing. Have you read it?"

The young man hadn't but he had read some of the other things, too.

"You patronize the public library?" he asked.

"Yes," said Maud. Then she felt that she ought to give an explanation. Rich young men who live on Lake Shore Drive didn't patronize public libraries, most likely. Still, there wasn't any use telling one's life history. If she said that she was a stenographer— Why not pretend that one was rich—It wouldn't be hard, surely. Then she and the young man could meet on the same ground, without explanations and things like that.

"Oh, yes," she told him, "I go to the public library frequently. There are so many things that one doesn't want to own, aren't there? And it's fun to browse among the books and pick up odd things that you'd never come across, ordinarily. And the people, I love to watch them." She really was telling the truth there, anyhow. "Don't you ever indulge—in public libraries?"

"Yes, yes, indeed," said the young man, and looked at her closely. "Same reason exactly, and, speaking of books, have you read—"

There they were—talking about books and magazines, just as Maud had often wished she could talk to someone, most preferably a young man with broad shoulders and a pleasant face.

The young man knew, personally, an author or two whom Maud had heard about, not great authors, just clever people. He had read a lot of things she had read and had read interesting things she hadn't. It was wonderfully pleasant.

They walked through Lincoln Park. They looked at the animals and bought peanuts for them. They looked at the bright colored birds. Then they sat on a bench and talked.

"Do you live near, near where we —met?" asked the young man.

Maud mentioned a wonderful new apartment building, just completed, where the rents, for a month, were larger than her yearly salary. She was afraid the young man might know who lived in the houses around there. The apartment building was quite large—she had walked through it one day before it had been completed, and she felt he couldn't very well know the names of all the tenants.

"So we are quite near neighbors," she added.

The young man smiled.

Maud hoped he'd say something about being glad, about wanting to see her soon—about—about almost anything like that. He didn't.

Still if he had—she couldn't have explained that she didn't live there, that she lived in a rooming house in Dearborn street.

Perhaps it was just as well to discourage him—even if he did want to see her again.

She would be lonesome again, of course, after this; even lonesomer.

But this would be a pleasant day, anyhow.

Still what could she say if the young man did ask to call?

He didn't.

He fumbled in his pocket, finally, and looked through a bundle of cards and handed one to her. "Orrin R. Bennett, Jr., 1650 Lake Shore Drive," she read.

"I'm sorry I can't ask to call," said Mr. Bennett, "but the truth is I'm going to New York this evening to be gone for a long time. I wish now that—" he paused.

Maud told him her name—her real name; you couldn't tell by the sound of it that she was poor and a working girl.

So he was going away! That was why he hadn't said anything about seeing her again. Would he have asked if he weren't going? Well, perhaps it was just as well this way. She wouldn't have to make up embarrassing excuses anyhow.

Bennett looked at his watch.

"After five," he said. "I can't believe it. Are you very busy? Have you, have you time to go down town with me? I wonder if you could. I've got to arrange about the tickets before five-thirty. Could you spare the time for me?"

Spare the time—Maud hadn't a thing to do—until time to go to the office on Monday. So she said that she thought she could spare the time easily.

At the edge of the park, Bennett hailed a taxi and they climbed in. Maud had ridden in taxis only on special occasions, usually when it was raining. They went to the railway office and Bennett went inside, stayed a few minutes and joined Maud, who had waited in the taxi. He showed her the tickets. He had been lucky enough to get the last lower berth.

"Now," he said, "after I get a messenger and send him out with a message or so, I've nothing to do until train time—and that's at eight-thirty. Can you—could you possibly have dinner with me down town?"

Maud considered, or pretended to consider. She knew very well that she certainly could have dinner with Bennett and that she intended to, now that she had been invited, and that she'd probably remember it for days.

"I, why yes; I believe I can," she said finally. "It will be rather awfully unconventional, but then we might have known each other, mightn't we? I suppose we really have a lot of mutual friends."

"Oh, yes," said Bennet slowly, "it's quite likely that we might have met conventionally, and yet sometimes folks we would like to know we never meet at all, or just for one day and then sometimes circumstances or something prevents us from ever knowing them better. There is no way to get around big obstacles, I suppose."

"Isn't there?" asked Maud.

"I'm—I'm afraid not," said Bennett. Then he brightened up. "But now there's no use our being so serious over it. Here we are, going to dinner together—and we don't know each other—the way folks are supposed to, anyhow, and we have all the pleasures of unexpected surprises. How much nicer than if we had met—say, at a dinner, and I knew your red-haired cousin and your stout uncle."

"I have a red-haired cousin," said Maud, "but he doesn't live in Chicago, and my uncles are quite too thin. Still it is nice this way—discovering each other for ourselves. Do you like discoveries?"

"Yes, only so few people are worth it. Here, in Chicago, do you ever notice how few people there are that are the sort you care about? But, of course, you aren't lonesome ever, are you? You modern girls, your lives are so full." He sighed a bit wistfully.

Maud looked at him closely. What a pleasant, frank, eager face he had. How she would have loved to have told him how lonesome, how dread-

fully lonesome she was. What a treat it was to meet someone like him who could talk about things she liked to talk about. Still, if he thought she was a stenographer, even a twenty-dollar-a-week, absolutely-capable kind, he'd probably get dignified and a bit cool and a bit disgusted and try to get out of even taking her to dinner. Young millionaires like Bennett didn't care about taking casually encountered working girls out to meals. It was only because he thought that she was a girl of his own class that he thought this was a pleasant adventure.

"Why, yes," said Maud, "I do get quite lonesome at times, but still I am so busy. There are so many things, charities, clubs, entertainments."

Bennett looked almost wistful again, then smiled. "Yes," he said, "girls to-day do manage to squeeze in quite a lot, it seems."

III

At the Sherman, Bennett dismissed the taxi and he and Maud went into the hotel. It was still early for dinner. He excused himself a minute to get the notes off by messenger, and Maud, in the ladies' room, powdered and arranged her hair even smoother and added a bit of rouge from the supplies that the maid had spread temptingly on a dressing table. As she tipped the maid she noticed that she had only fifty cents in her purse. Well, she wouldn't need any money this evening, anyhow.

In a few minutes Bennett joined her and they went down to the café. It was still early but there were a number of before-dinner patrons drinking preparatory cocktails. Bennett ordered dinner. Maud approved of all of it. She had known that some place, of course, there were men who knew how to do things nicely like that, but she had been so afraid that she would never meet one of them. The boys in her home town had been nice enough, pleasant and well bred, but they didn't know much about city things. Now Bennett had just the right information, apparently. Even one evening with him was much better than never having met anyone like him—

The dinner was good from the clams to the coffee. Even the music sounded better than the regulation restaurant music. Maud usually patronized little, decent neighborhood restaurants. Now she enjoyed the people, but most of all she enjoyed having someone across the table who could talk interestingly and comfortably. There is all the difference in the world between one and two at a restaurant table.

"Do you object to the noise here?" asked Bennett. The restaurant was filling up.

"I love it," she told him truthfully. "There is something about a big restaurant, watching people together, wondering about them—it is always interesting to me."

"I feel that way, too," said Bennett, "I—I come here—quite often," he finished rather lamely.

He started to say something, hesitated, stammered, and then said some commonplace thing about restaurants in general. Maud was afraid that maybe after all she didn't quite act the part of a girl who is sued to everything. It's a hard part to take without practice.

They talked music then. They had both heard a number of operas during the last season. Maud didn't say that she had looked down from the topmost gallery on little toy-sized figurines. Well, the music had been good up there anyhow.

By the time they had reached the coffee they had told each other dozens of little things about themselves, the sort of little, pleasant, personal things that Maud hadn't talked about in ages. But Maud couldn't help feeling that Bennett's conversation, while truthful and interesting, was

indefinite. "Still," she thought, "he probably doesn't want to tell me too much about himself, if he doesn't intend to see me again." Her own conversation had been most carefully guarded.

Finally it was time to go. Bennett looked at his watch again. He would just have time to catch his train. He paid the waiter and ordered a taxicab. When it came he took Maud out and helped her in. He gave the driver the address she had given him.

"I've had a wonderfully good time, a wonderful time," he said, "and thank you for dining with me, and *auf widersehn.*"

"I've had a good time, too," said Maud, "a splendid time."

The door of the taxi closed.

He was gone.

For a few blocks the taxi went swiftly along. Then Maud remembered that taxi fares rose rapidly and that she had only fifty cents with her. She signalled the driver.

"I'll get out here," she told him, then "how much do I owe you?"

"Paid for," said the driver stolidly. Evidently he was used to young women who changed their minds about where they were going.

She took a surface car home. Back in her room for some unknown reason, she threw herself across the bed, it was in its daylight disguise of a couch just then, and cried. Then she was ashamed of herself for crying.

"You meet a young millionaire and he takes you to dinner and you have a mighty pleasant time—and then you cry about it," she scolded herself.

Finally she wiped her eyes and powdered her nose.

IV

It was only a little after eight-thirty now. Saturday night, and here she was, lonesome again. She couldn't stay in her room all evening thinking about Bennett and the walk and the dinner. She would think about him, of course, for a long time, but even that didn't make Saturday night as pleasant as it ought to be. She knew that Rosetta was out with the pale young man. Even Morton-on-the-floor-above seemed to have found some place to go. All of the other roomers were probably out, too; though even if they weren't, that wasn't much comfort.

Eight-thirty—Bennett was just getting on the train for New York. Would he think about her? Why hadn't he asked to see her again, sometimes. Still—even if he had asked—

Well, she could go to the movies, anyhow. Looking at stupid things on the screen might help a little. There were always interior views of houses that were funny enough to laugh at, anyhow. Still, if there was only some one to go with to the movies—movies are four times as much fun when someone is along.

But the movies were disappointing. There was part of a serial about a robbery mystery, and, as Maud hadn't seen the first of it, it was nearly over before she found out what it was that the villain—whom she knew by his makeup as soon as the film flashed—was doing that was so villainous. Then came a comedy, full of custard pies and stairways, and then a one-reeler about home and mother. Tiresome, but there was nothing to do in her room and it was too early to go to bed. At half-past nine she had seen it all. She found her way out of the dark theater. At a nearby drug store she bought a bag of chocolates and a couple of magazines. After all, she might as well plan for tomorrow—Sundays were lonesome, too.

Slowly she walked to the rooming house. The night was lovely, soft, not at all a night to be lonesome in. She turned in at the rooming house and went slowly up the walk and up the white stone stairs. Then she heard someone else coming up the walk. Another roomer? She turned

around before she opened the door. There—not three feet away—she could not believe it at first—stood Orrin E. Bennett, Jr. She gave a glad little laugh.

"I—I thought you were going to New York," she said.

Then suddenly she remembered. He hadn't known that she lived there. He was supposed to be on his way to New York—and here he was at her rooming house door.

"You—you've been following me," she said, and her voice trembled a little, though she tried to speak haughtily.

"I'm, why, I'm—honest, I'm not at all." He seemed trying to say more and was even more confused than Maud was.

They both looked at each other a minute rather hopelessly. Then:

"I—I didn't tell you I lived on the Drive," said Bennett, "you thought I did and I was afraid to correct your impressions, and I thought—" his words jumbled together, then, "I'm not following you," he finished, "I live here."

"You live here?" said Maud, only partially comprehending. "Why, what do you mean? You're making fun of me. You've followed me. If not, I don't understand at all. I live here myself."

Then the young man laughed again, a low, pleasant voice, his head thrown back.

"Then you don't live in the St. James' Apartments?"

"Then you aren't in New York?" asked Maud, who was starting to understand. Then she remembered the card he had given her. "But your name—the address was Lake Shore Drive. You were coming out of a house there, that address, too, when I—"

The young man was still laughing, but he become serious again.

"I can explain that, in a way, if you'll let me. You see, my boss's name is Bennett and he does live on Lake Shore Drive and he has a son whose name is Orrin E. Bennet, Jr. He is going to New York this evening, gone by this time, I suppose. Well, it was Saturday afternoon and the office was closed and I had some important notes that the boss wanted to see before he left, so I said I'd bring them by for him to see. I said I'd get his tickets and send them to him by a messenger boy. Well, I was coming out of the house and you came along and started dropping things and then—"

"But you told me you were a millionaire and—"

"My dear young lady," said the young man-who-wasn't-Bennett-at-all, "I didn't. You just thought I did. I thought you were rich and I did so want to talk to you—in spite of it. I knew that if I told you I was a broker's clerk and lived in a rooming house on Dearborn street you'd never talk to me under the circumstances. I oughtn't to have used the card, of course, but I remembered that I had it and it fitted in pretty well. After all that, I didn't dare try to make another engagement, for I thought you really were rich, you know, but I wanted to, awfully. I do get so lonesome here."

"Me too," said Maud, "and of course, I was pretending too, only I thought it was you that was rich and I was afraid you wouldn't like me, if you know that I—oh, don't you see—and here you aren't named Bennett and you aren't in New York and—and—oh—"

"My name," said the young man, "is Laurence Morton—"

"And," interrupted Maud, "you are young Mr. Morton-who-lives-above me."

"No doubt of it," said the young-man-who-was-Mr. Morton. "And no wonder your name sounded so familiar. Why I've seen your name on letters lots of times down on the hall table. And now—"

"Yes, now," said Maud, and her lip quivered a bit again.

"Well, now," said Morton, "I've

still a little loose change left in my pockets—some place. What do you say to walking to the corner drug store for a soda? And if you haven't an engagement tomorrow—"

"Tomorrow," repeated Maud stupidly as they retraced their steps down the walk. The lonesome "tomorrow" then was going away. Mr. Bennett wasn't in New York, that is, Mr. Bennett wasn't Mr. Bennett at all and—

"Tomorrow," repeated Morton, "if you'd like to we might play tennis in the park for a little while; you said you played, I remember, and then we could go to a funny little table d'hôte place I know for dinner—"

I LOVED HIM TILL AN HOUR AGO

By June Gibson

I LOVED him till an hour ago.

. . . . . .

He spoke of languid purple violets damp with dew, and of saffron sunsets behind black trees.

He told me that my breath was sweeter than the fragrance of China lilies and that I was as graceful as a summer cloud.

He held me in his arms and murmured: "It is as if I were embracing a moonbeam."

And an hour ago he kissed me. . . . .

. . . . . .

I loved him till an hour ago. . . . .

He kissed me *out loud*.

THE TRYST

By Muna Lee

PALE little songs, they come to me in the night,
Singing the sorrow that day may not know;
They come long, long after candle-light,
And long before dawn they go.

Pale little songs, that break my heart with their pain
—Their pain which is mine—which the day may not see—
I walked in the sun with a tearless face
Because I know that the night will bring them to me.

HIS NAME IS LEGION

By Jay Neville

THE aura enveloping the person of Mr. Ebenezer Tompkins when he arose was not of a pale, peaceful, pinkish hue. On the contrary the subtle psychic vibrations contiguous to the body of Mr. Tompkins might better be described as a bellicose black and blue. In other and less esoteric words, Ebenezer Tompkins was possessed of his customary morning grouch. According to his habit of years he shaved savagely, composed a caustic causerie concerning cold coffee, kicked the cat, cussed considerably, and chased for the car for the city.

Mr. Tompkins flung himself into a seat among his fellow commuters. To the affable smile of the conductor Mr. Tompkins returned growls and scowls. At the sweet-faced woman by his side he stared stolidly. At the genial fat man across the aisle he glared gloomily. He did everything in his power to publish abroad the sad tidings that Ebenezer Tompkins's sweet bells were badly out of tune.

On the way to the office the belligerent Mr. Tompkins hurled blood-curdling anathemas at the noisy newsboys. Two beggars were inundated by the avalanche of his sinister looks. An indignant old woman, into whom he catapulted in charging around a corner, received a curse instead of an apology. The elevator man, who attempted to be conversational, was annihilated by one warlike snort.

"Hello, Tompkins!"

It was his master's voice. It was Mr. Tompkins's boss!

"Why, good morning, Mr. Jones! It's a glorious day, isn't it, sir! Hope you feel as jolly as I do!" sang out a beaming Mr. Tompkins—joy and hope and buoyant optimism personified.

Mr. Jones roared with laughter. "Tompkins," he chuckled, admiringly, "you're a wonder—a veritable marvel! How in the world do you manage to do it? I've been your boss for ten years, and I've never seen you lose your temper yet!"

THE only fault with marriage is that one sees the same face at the breakfast table every morning. The one fault with bachelorhood is that one sees a different face at the dinner table each night.

WHEN a woman has not been kissed in a taxi for a fortnight, she thinks she has begun to grow old.

BREAKING OUT OF SOCIETY

By —— —— ——*

I

WHEN I was a boy, I remember I used to read fiction that began something in this manner: *Should I sully the white page before me with my true name and noble lineage, the reader would . . .*

It seems odd to me, therefore, that I must begin my only contribution to print with a parody of that former fictional gesture. Yet I feel that I cannot give this article weight unless I state at the outset that were I to set down my name, you would at once know who I was.

I say that, with the assumption that you live in a civilized community, read metropolitan papers and periodicals, and are aware, however dimly, of the celebrated figures of national—and indeed, I may say, international—society. Astor, Vanderbilt—what do these connote to you? You reply, no doubt, that they arouse pictures of various vague personages who exist in a certain rarefied and remote strata. Yet for all their lack of clearness, and be you ever so far from the outskirts of social prominence, those names are as familiar to you as the name of your cook.

And I, who write this, am just such another vague personage.

I cannot claim a long or distinguished ancestry, but that is not essential. Contrary to a well-established tradition, the society of every generation and of every land is ruled by jump-ups. The descendants of the latter decay into musty conservatism, and are in turn ruled and animated by other jump-ups. In the days of Ward McAllister my father found his place; and I had merely to bear his name and continue to purchase prestige with the money that he left.

This duty my two sisters found extremely simple. One has married an Englishman of title and lived a bored and monotonous existence on the other side. I have reason to believe that since the war she scrutinizes the weekly "Roll of Honor" with an interest that is just a trifle cruel. My second sister married into Washington society and appears to gather a lively entertainment out of a conjunction of social rivalry and political intrigue. My only brother, a devotee of polo and a crack horseman, cultivates his stables, a very bad taste in chorus-girls, and a *flair* for yachting.

With such a background of contemporary relatives, with an aunt who keeps up her end lavishly, and a male cousin whose going on the stage after five years of wild living proved a mild scandal to his set, it is clear that the path to social celebrity was pretty clearly prepared for me.

In my family I was reputed to have the brains, just as the eldest of my sisters was supposed to hold the card for good looks. A super-exclusive school, and, later, the Harvard Gold Coast, graduated me a worldly and excessively wise youth with the mark of my class indelibly written upon me. In the meantime, even as I had formulated a pretty cynical notion of those institutions which the bulk of the people are accustomed to idealize—marriage, love, sacrifice, and the rest—I had gathered a certain finesse in taste.

I had, indeed, developed a discriminating appreciation of literature and music. I liked and understood that art which is superior to magazine covers,

* *For obvious reasons, the author of this article remains anonymous.*

knew myself how to employ colour values in decoration, and was a connoisseur in china. I say I appreciated these things; that I was able to do more would be a gross untruth. I was the perfect dilettante.

The following nine years, with the exception of such intervals as were devoted to travel on the Continent and in the tropics, I lived my life in the best society of New York. At the end of that period, frankly disgusted, wearied beyond human endurance, I decided to break away from a life which was, to me, essentially intolerable.

The considerations which impelled me to that decision were not of that bourgeois order which the seeker of testimonials is likely to hail with joy. I did not detest society because of an innate nobility of nature which rejected false values. I did not turn away because of a loathing for snobbery and the injustice of snobbery.

The institution of caste, in the first place, appeals to me immensely. Democracy is as impossible as it is ludicrous. There are always varying degrees of power in every community of souls. In some cases—and here I cite the obvious—that power is logically distributed on a basis of physical strength, in others on a basis of money, in others still on a basis of intellect. It is platitudinous to observe that we are all snobs of one sort or another—snobs of culture, snobs of religion, snobs of morals, snobs of immorals. The only way a man can preserve the most dominant of his characteristics, self-esteem, is to look down upon someone else; and it is always easiest to do this in bands.

I am a snob, and I am proud of it! Good ladies who go regularly to church and fancy themselves superior to those who do not will doubtless be shocked by such a declaration. And they would cut me as readily as I would cut their pastor.

It was then for another reason that I decided to decamp from society. Or, rather, it was from another form of snobbery. Society was too stupid for me.

I have wit and I like to use it. It was easy to impress the world in which I lived that I was a wit, but it was hard to find a single person who was capable of intelligent understanding. I was acclaimed a keen fellow, and débutantes, properly warned, would break into correct laughter if I opened my mouth with a mere stale comment. My reputation grew with my astonishment. I found people respecting me, listening to me, begging me to join their functions and dinners and parties, and yet hardly comprehending a line I uttered. Society, indeed, has no mind; it does as it is told. And it was told that I was a sharp, cynical person with a clever tongue, and that it was to be amused by my talk.

I began to be as bored as I often looked. I like idleness, I can be happy doing nothing. But idleness among fools disgusted me. And the bad manners of society destroyed my remaining illusions. I have seen many peoples and many lands, and stared with an analytical eye at many habits of existence, but I think that nowhere is life so coarse, so crude, so illiterate and unsubtle as in the highest grades of "polite" society.

I realized, at length, why it was that a man like James Hazen Hyde disappeared so utterly. I knew why Harry Lehr faded of his own accord into obscurity. A man with any intellect, or pretense to intellect, could not long remain in that top circle (which, by the way, is far, far slimmer in numbers than four hundred) and retain his self-respect.

II

I TOOK the step only when I grew deathly tired of the round of unpleasing pleasures. I was tired, too, of the necessity for living up to my reputation as a wit when that wit was quite unappreciated. I wanted, for a little while at least, to be frankly and simply myself. To feel oneself forced to reply in second-rate epigrams for the whole natural course of one's life is a nauseous prospect.

I imagine I felt a little like a master

philanderer who, seeking occasional peace, discovers that every woman whom he meets is aware of his reputation and desires him to make love to her at the top of his bent.

Yes, I wanted a little rest. The overfed women, with their sycophants and their doctors; the empty fops, who permitted cocktails and cocottes to make daily fools of them; the malicious and grasping younger women, who so hungrily sought husbands and had nothing save selfishness and an inordinate vanity to offer; the sport-sodden, elderly roués—the whole wretched, superficial lot sickened me to the soul.

Then, when I was thirty-three years old, I flung up things with a crash.

To my brother I parted with my interest in our Newport place, and I disposed privately of my holdings in Tuxedo Park. I dispatched my resignations to the Piping Rock, the Knickerbocker and the other clubs of which I was a member. I put my quiet house, just off the Avenue, in the hands of an agent, and I let my camp and its acres in the mountains go for a song.

I was unmarried, luckily. Otherwise I could not have taken the step. The act of breaking out of society, when one is in it, strikes you, no doubt, as a simple and placid performance. I can only assure you that it is as difficult to break out as it is to break in. Perhaps it is more difficult. It is my purpose in this article to explain not only why I left but the difficulties of my leaving.

I went about my endeavor in that cool and shrewd manner that a strong man who finds abstinence necessary goes about the business of quitting drink. Tired of tawdry *affaires* (of which, I frankly admit, I had had my share), with no interest in sport, bored by the scandals which had long become conventions in my eyes, I determined to drop abruptly from my own world.

Let anyone, no matter what his station, imagine his retiring completely from his circle of fellowship, and he will understand how patently impossible such a course would be. The task to which I had to bend my own energies was to force that world to drop away from *me*. To forsake sharply all associations, to forsake the traditions to which half a lifetime had been devoted, and yet to continue to live in the environment which fostered those associations and traditions, was out of the question. And I didn't want to go into exile.

For I love New York. After a course of irrelevant but critical wandering, I found myself at home at last in the big, sprawling city that we all love and we all hate. Her galleries and her theaters, her peoples and her restlessness, her botched architecture, her tawdry colours, her mellowed tints—for each mood of our pompous braggart of a town I found an answering mood in myself. The real New Yorker, I suppose, is the most hopeless of provincials: he can conceive of no possible grace existing beyond the borders of his own Manhattan. Therefore—

I fancied myself compelled to declare, by some gradual and quiet demonstration, that my associates and their lives held no further interest for me. I wanted only New York and an artistic hermitage there. It is easy to cut half a dozen objectionables, but, reader, would you find it easy to cut everyone of your acquaintanceship? If, worse, you have an acquaintanceship as huge as mine—men in every club, women in every fashionable home, would you find it easy? I had to, as I have said, make them cut me.

To force this issue, my imagination primarily went no further than rendering myself a bore. A simple thing, that. I conversed thereafter about the only two things that interested me greatly: art and myself.

I think I was successful as a bore, but then it is not difficult to succeed at such an endeavor. But—at the end of a month I found, to my overwhelming surprise, that my interminable monologues concerning my own virtues and incomparable excellences, and the virtues of a Sorolla, or of a letter of Lafcadio Hearn's, were considered

actually interesting! *Society was too stupid to be bored.*

Believe it or not. If you hesitate to accept it, you will have difficulty in crediting that which is to follow. Consider yourself the victim of a satiric hoax in these pages if you will; I cannot give my name in refutation. But life, to anyone who has lived it keenly, is more satiric than the imaginings of the most jaundiced intelligence. Sentiment, ideals, romance, are but the sugar coating on the bitter pill of irony. Be one of the crowd: swallow it quickly and you'll not taste the bitter!

My failure stumped me temporarily. Over a cigar I pondered my problem. Then, with a grin, I determined to depart by the most drastic of methods. To the devil with my reputation! What did I care for the opinion of fools, if those fools would only leave me alone? I decided that, bad-mannered as society was, I would shock it by yet greater crudities. I would out-rude even the leaders of the highest plane of social intercourse thus far attained by civilization.

III

Two days after I had laid my plans, I informed my hostess at a select function, in the presence of her guests, that she was a hopeless alcoholic victim. That obvious and admitted fact called forth a gasp; the woman lost colour, then recovered her self-possession, called me "an amusing old thing," and hid her rage under a smile.

I did not feel at all remorseful after my insult; indeed, my only regret was that my lack of tact would probably pass for lack of intelligence. I was consoled, however, by the thought that her house in future would be closed to me, and that the houses of several of her friends would follow suit. She could afford to take such an action; for, though I was important, she was important also.

Once in the water, I began to swim. I knocked about me clumsily and careless of result.

Within twenty-four hours I had asserted to his face and before his friends that a young man who bears a name which is doubtless as familiar to you as the names Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Chaplin, or Robert W. Chambers was a liar and a fool.

I brought a divorced couple together who had successfully avoided each other for years.

Upon two invitations I wrote, "Go to the devil!" and remailed them.

I made numerous engagements for the sole purpose of breaking them.

I wove into these major sunderings of all that constitutes good form, innumerable minor rudenesses. Were I to catalogue these, you would believe them untrue. For the chances are that you are unaware of the *average* rudeness of good society.

Incredible, you call this? A silly lie? Or, at best, a preposterous exaggeration? I am giving you the truth, and where I fall away from veracity, it is on the side of my own aggressiveness. This is a case in which I must shade down, not exaggerate, the tale of my actions to give them reality.

What was the result of my conduct? I conjectured that after a reckless fortnight of frank bludgeoning, I would have little trouble avoiding invitations and unwelcome acquaintances. I didn't care a hang about what people thought of me. To be free, to be alone, to be unbothered—that was the aim of my existence; and if it seems to you that I acted like a maniac in attaining that aim, strive to attain a similar one yourself.

For two weeks and the week following I found people regarding me curiously; I saw myself made the subject of whispers, of even printed speculation in the weekly that records smart gossip. I was succeeding. I was cheerful. Presently I should be unhampered.

Then there arrived the week after that period of what was, apparently, only hesitation. It had been a deceptive breathing spell. The invitations had partially dropped away, my 'phone jangled less frequently. But now, as by

a mob impulse, society took me up more furiously than ever before!

It is an amazing fact. I still find it one. But somehow or other that poor, muddled mob brain decided that I was "an original." My outbursts were the culmination of my wit. I had my tongue in my cheek, and I was giving society a new sensation by my "delicious candour."

I was forthwith besieged by those very people among whom I had scattered my cruelest insults. I do not seek to explain this. It is, rather, the task of the psychologist. I offer you simply the bare fact without interpretation. As an example, I quote here a characteristic note of the many I received at the time. It is from a prominent woman whom society is proud to acknowledge one of its leaders in the matter of intellect. I may add to that that I have not attempted to alter the spelling.

Dear . . .

Won't you join us Wednesday for the plan I called you up about, you wicked man? I'll be disconsilate as everyone will be if you don't, because we all want you, everyone of us. Do what-ever you want. Though you will anyway. That's the charm of it. You're the only human being who isn't tiresome. Everybody's afraid to meet you since your new pose, but everybody loves to just the same. You're an obssesion. You scare us with your unexpectedness. Come! That's all.

Yours . . .

With this sort of thing being shoveled into my mail-box, you can conceive of the depths of my ironic despair. I think I was ready to commit murder. The abominable fools thought me amusing them by studied intent!

IV

Two years have passed since that painful period, two years since I did effectually break out of society. As to just what scandals are connected with my name, just what speculations concerning my lunacy or feeble-mindedness, I have neither knowledge nor care. I have now my books, my pictures, my china, a friend or two among the people who are interested in such things, and —my peace.

I said that it was my task to make society run away from me, not to take flight myself. I discovered my stratagem quite inadvertently. I repeated it. It began to be talked about. Two women, I remember, began to remonstrate in their set. "It is really too much—one can stand a good deal. But —I draw the line at that."

Important as I was, within two or three months after I had taken the step it would have required a *coup* on my part to retain any popularity had I desired to do so. People dropped me like a hot coal, because—other people were doing so. You know how such things happen.

Nothing is quite flawless. Successful as my scheme was, it has, I fear, left certain evil consequences. Still, one cannot hope for perfection in this life of imperfections. . . .

And by what means did I escape? What, after all, was responsible?

It is difficult to tell of my stratagem in the crudities of the English tongue. The French have a more mellifluous expression for my action. I became, in short, *un mangeur d'ail!*

Do you wonder at my escape?

SUDDEN friendship between women means but one thing. They are not interested in the same man.

THE CLEVERER

By James Nicholas Young

TWO crystal glasses, each filled with rich, red wine, stood before the man. In one, mixed with the juices of the grape, was a potent poison. His enemies, into whose clutches he had fallen, had decreed that he must drink from one—whichever one he chose.

It was a fiendish punishment worthy of those who had devised it. As the man sat in his cell and gazed wonderingly at the glasses he suffered keenly—more keenly, perhaps, than would have been the case had there been no possibility of escape from death.

Life had been merciless with him. Men and women had failed him and turned against him in innumerable crises; and many times he had been basely wronged by those who pretended to love him. As a very natural consequence he had become hard, cold, cynical. He loved no one. He trusted no one. . . .

As he was endeavoring to decide in which of the innocent-looking glasses lay the fatal potion, a guard handed him some flowers. Among them he found a tiny note. It was from a woman—a woman who claimed to love him, but who, he suspected, ardently desired his death.

"Drink from the glass which is the larger of the two.—Esmeralda," he read.

Now, the man was very, very clever. Also, the woman who had sent him the note was very, very clever.

"She is playing me false," reasoned the man. "She desires my death. She knows that I trust no one. And she tells me to drink the wine in the larger glass. I shall outwit her!"

So saying, the man stretched forth his hand, seized the larger glass, and drained it.

Yes, the man was very, very clever.

Also, the woman was very, very clever.

In fact, she was the cleverer of the two.

In six seconds the man was dead.

PEOPLE WOULD SAY

By Laurens Cook

I AM in love with an ugly woman. Mine is a love of which the wee-bees hum in the May-time . . . . of which the poets dream. Truly my love is great . . . . for she is as poor as the proverbial church mouse.

And yet I will not marry the woman because . . . . though she is penniless . . . . she is also ugly . . . . and people would say . . . . I married her for her money.

A GOOD INFLUENCE

By Paul Hervey Fox

I

ONE placid Sunday afternoon, Mr. Felix Stannard awaited the approach of four o'clock with a certain trepidation.

He had not seen Horatio Royes and his wife, Susan, for two years. The Royes had gone to California for recuperation and had apparently torn themselves away with difficulty. A casual correspondence had informed Felix of the birth of an heir to the House of Royes; and today he was to be privileged to inspect the infant and greet his old friends for the first time since their return.

Felix was a gentle and genial bachelor who took his fifty-six years with, it seemed, more gravity than was demanded. He lived in peaceful rooms with a housekeeper, one cat, and a few first editions. Saturday evenings he played a game of chess, often staying up as late as eleven.

His pleasures of the carnal kind were equally moderate: a Turkish cigarette after breakfast, one good Havana after dining, and an occasional glass of a deep, palatable port, a wine of flavor —these were the extent of his surrenders to the indulgences of the flesh.

Save at Easter and Christmas he did not present himself at any church; and four or five times each season he went to the playhouses, selecting something light, something agreeable, as an antidote against the possibly poisonous calm of his existence.

No man finds himself in such a position that he is not outdeviled by some and not regarded with horror by others. In the eyes of his brother George and George's fashionable wife, Felix led a pitiable and stupid life; but to Horatio and Susan Royes, the timid celibate was a vehicle designed for destruction and the wrath of a retributive heaven.

For the cause of this attitude of the Royes, it is not necessary to look far.

Horatio Royes was one of those eccentric millionaires in whom virtue attains the proportions of a vice. The fortune he had inherited, he employed in good works; and his austere wife seconded him in lecture tours and reform endeavors. From their standpoint, quite naturally, Felix appeared to lead an existence that smacked of sin.

But Felix was pleasant and courteous, and the Royes, though they harassed the good man with appeals to free himself from the besetting evils of tobacco, strong drink, theaters, and other symbols of inner corruption, really liked him in their frigid manner.

And now, when the situation seemed immutable and understood, a new, a potent factor was to crash into their relationship.

Felix wondered whether Horatio Royes' baby would look quite like other people's babies. With the memory of their habit of righteous exhortation before him, he had a grotesque fancy that the child had doubtless been born with spectacles on a thin, high nose, and cold lips that sounded their first cry in a Greek quotation.

He moved nervously about his rooms, dusted an old prayer-book, esteemed for its rarity rather than its literature, and placed it prominently on the reading-table.

When, a little later, Mrs. Main, his housekeeper, ushered in the Royes, Felix confessed himself surprised. They were rigid still, but they seemed,

even at an initial scrutiny, less given to head-shaking and remorse-hunting.

Felix flashed upon the obvious at once: it was due to the presence of a helpless child: a good influence.

His primal impression of the heir to the House of Royes was of the inappropriateness of the christened name. The baby that was exposed to his gaze in the arms of Susan Royes surely merited some other name than "Cyril"! Felix was not a man to be hasty in impressions or to be swayed over-easily by physiognomy, but at the first glimpse of the infant he shuddered slightly.

That babies have individual facial characteristics he had always, like an honest bachelor, disputed.

Yet the child before him had features of definite proportions, as if it had attained maturity at a bound—as if, say, worldly wisdom were in its possession before it could manage the trick of speech. To his perturbed vision there actually seemed knowing lines on those infantile cheeks!

Felix was sufficiently worldly to think candor a good friend but a poor acquaintance, and he flattered himself that his "Ah!" rang the correct note of rapture. With a presentation speech prepared for the occasion, and purposed to be droll, he got out the little silver mug with which he had provided himself, and offered it into the hands of the child.

Cyril shot him a furtive grin, and then turned an anxious scrutiny on the mug's interior. With a howl of disappointment he dropped it to the floor.

Ordinarily Felix would have seen nothing unusual in this performance, but here it was suddenly invested with an amazing significance.

There was created in him the conviction that the child had been born with a craving for drink!

This revelation was followed by one hardly less shocking. In an effort to parade the infant's talents, Susan Royes urged:

"Speak to Father, Cyril. Say Dad. Dad!"

Felix, even with his limited experience of infants, was aware that on an occasion of this sort, they bleat "Daa," and virtuously neglect to close the mouth on that syllable.

Cyril was, however, otherwise constituted. Regarding the guest with a smile of, apparently, low cunning, he coolly remarked: "Daaam!"

After that the bachelor could hardly restrain a bitter laugh when he heard the parents declare their intention to fit the child for the missionary field.

It was at this juncture that the 'phone rang.

Felix, answering it, discovered that it was a tracer for his guests. The message delivered was disturbing. A new cure of souls for the church patronized by the Royes had that day arrived in town, and was even now the guest at a small reception in which they were necessary factors.

"Drat it!" ejaculated Horatio, an expression that served as a kind of milk-oath, and which he employed only in moments of stress. "My memory has been very weak of late. . . . Susan, didn't you recall that this was the day we were to—"

Susan Royes gazed reprovingly over her glasses.

"No. I left that to you," she murmured. "Well, since it's done, how are we to manage? We can't take Cyril there, and to go home at this hour and then try to reach there in time would be—"

Her hesitation was a pointed appeal without much subtlety.

Felix was too urbane not to make the desired suggestion, though he had a premonition of disaster even as he spoke. With a hollow enthusiasm he offered to play nurse to Cyril while the parents went junketing off to greet the new pastor. They could return early, conclude their visit and carry the infant home. And upon that the arrangement was made.

II

AFFAIRS opened with an excellent augury in the shape of calm.

Cyril, from the couch where he had

been deposited, watched the preparations of his progenitors with a speculative eye. And for some time after their departure he kept a discreet silence, perhaps judging them still within earshot. Then as Felix strolled casually towards his shelves, a howl of undoubted celebration jerked his shoulders around.

The festivities had commenced.

Somewhere Felix remembered reading the story or seeing a play about a bachelor's tribulations with a deserted infant; it had seemed to him at the time quite dull and empty, but now he beat his memory to recall by what acute stratagems peace had been ensnared. For Cyril's lungs, while highly interesting for the power they revealed, were hardly adapted to an apartment house maintained primarily for the delight of widows and single gentlemen. The only suggestion that awoke in his mind was that he might possibly lull the child by a few contortions.

Forthwith Felix, disregarding the discordant note of his graying hair and dignified manner, doubled, twisted, turned, writhed, gibbered, and grimaced. The endeavor was without avail; Cyril was clearly howling for sophisticated amusement, and for these puerile maneuvers he had, apparently, only disdain.

"What, my dear child, do you wish?" questioned Felix, as, quite red in the face and puffing from his strange labors, he desisted.

"Daaam!" retorted the infant in an insolent yell.

Prompted by immediate necessity, a second consideration came to Felix. He lifted the child gingerly into his arms, and carried him about the room to an accompaniment of ridiculous noises intended to be soporific. For some time this attempt seemed as vain as its predecessor, but as Felix neared the bookshelves, Cyril reduced his clamor to a low, whining sound of contentment.

Just what attraction there lay for the infant in these stored compartments of charm or learning, Felix could not at first determine; and discovery came, even in his present knowledge of the character of the individual in his arms, with a deal of shock.

Cyril fingered the red back of Rabelais with a sound of pleasure and pointed a libidinous thumb to a yellow *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. The significance of his gestures was obvious. Felix placed both books under his arms, and proceeded, cold with horror, on his tour. As, however, they reached the reading-table, he gathered that he had been mistaken, that this precocious child was, after all, hardly precocious enough to have developed a pornographic taste in eighteen months of existence. For Cyril, with a shrill blat of delight, stretched forth both hands and captured the prayer-book that was lying there. Perceiving this, Felix felt a little relieved; undoubtedly coincidence and bright bindings had conspired to produce the infant's previous choice.

He had not yet seen the end of the affair; and his opinion was to switch again and that very shortly.

En route to the couch was a hearth with a grate-fire which provided Felix with an occupation in life. Passing this, Cyril crowed and then, quite voluntarily, dropped the prayer-book into the clicking coals. The binding was dry, the paper brittle with age; a second sufficed to send up the precious relic in a tongue of flame.

Felix regarded the malefactor with a glare that required no verbal interpretation. In a silence of anger, he put the youthful Royes with his selections from the library upon the couch, and sulkily awaited his further performances.

Cyril, fumbling awkwardly with the two volumes, pushed them open and for a moment scrutinized the pages. To Felix, Rabelias and Gautier were cherished as philosopher and stylist, and he shrank from that interest in them which is directed solely by impurity. His emotions at beholding the infant wrinkling his brow over the print for a purpose that was surely too clear were commingled with loathing.

Yet Cyril, unfortunately, had not

brought from a previous incarnation adult abilities with his adult obscenity: he hadn't learned to read. With a wail of despair at his frustration and a shove from his fat legs, he shot the jolly monk and the perfect lover to the floor. His wail rose, descended, and rose again. It was not exactly designed for the discriminating ear. Felix, ever timid, saw himself confronted by a crew of outraged tenants, captained by a clumsy-voiced agent. In the agitation of the moment and forgetful of the sound-proof walls, he put aside his quarrel for a later reckoning, and rather feverishly sought for new propitiatory measures.

On a chance plan he caught up a selected Swinburne that lay on his desk by the window. The voice falling into beats and rhythms might, he conjectured, woo Cyril from his bored anguish by its natural music. He threw the book open, and, as fortune decreed, found he had turned to the colourful and sensual *Dolores*. This was no time to weigh the matter of a choice. With reluctant energy he flung into the task. As his voice sounded the changes of the poet's mood, the fervor, the bitterness, the delirium of passion, Cyril sat up and ceased his outcry.

There seemed to be a lurking smile of appreciation in the infant's filmy eyes; his lips appeared twisted in a repulsive smirk of satisfaction. Yet Felix, with his heart beating indignantly, and colour as vivid as in the lines he declaimed rising in his face, read furiously through to the end.

Brief was the respite.

He had hardly concluded when low, rising wails from Cyril proclaimed a desire for more.

Felix swept swiftly over the pages to another selection. This time he fancied he had hit upon more appropriate stanzas. The poem was, indeed, *Etude Rèaliste,* beginning:

"A baby's feet, like sea-shells pink . . ."

It is a sufficient indication of the opinion of Felix to say that he was hardly astonished when Cyril burst out in agonized protest against the charming, sentimental verses.

All attempts at reading were at an end. The bachelor determined that come what might, he would not again demean himself by the delivery of indelicate literature. He caught up Cyril in his arms, and promenaded hopelessly about his rooms. His blind course took him at last to the neatly tiled bathroom. By the shelf of toilet articles the baby relapsed into a sudden silence for which Felix could account only by setting it down to a realization of the effectiveness of contrast.

Weak and grateful, he carried the child back to the main room.

As he reached the couch, he was suddenly aware of the actual reason for Cyril's quietness. A cruel spurt of liquid went trickling down his shirt-bosom, and a small bottle tumbled to the floor. The infant had purloined from the bathroom shelf the flask of Jamaica rum (from which Felix compounded medicinal toddies when he contracted colds) and by inverting the bottle had managed to drop out the loose cork. Felix put the child down.

"You young blackguard, you!" he said between set teeth.

He dried his shirt and trousers inefficiently with a handkerchief; the air was thick with barroom odours. He wondered how much longer his ordeal was to continue, and at the thought made to pull out his watch. It was gone!

He swept his enraged gaze on Cyril.

"Have you sneaked my watch now?" he snarled.

Cyril wagged his head vaguely, but gave answer in a clear, negative sequence of n's.

Felix could not help but believe this reply, but the next instant he heard an unmistakable sound of ticking, proceeding, as it were, from the child's internals.

"Liar!" he said with a restrained fury. "You've got it on you! I wish you'd swallowed it!"

The watch was undoubtedly ticking in some conjectural portion of Cyril's clothing. Felix lifted him and turned him carefully about like a fragile bit of mechanism, abetting his search with

random prods. Cyril remonstrated against the treatment with wild squawkings. In the end Felix was forced to put him down.

Lowering his eyelids with a leer of insufferable triumph, the infant coolly awaited developments.

Felix seldom resorted to oaths, but on this occasion nothing else seemed adequate.

"You devil!" he exclaimed. "You've beaten me so far, but, my young friend, see if I don't kill you when you grow up!"

Cyril's only reply was a scornful laugh.

At that moment there was a knock from the corridor. Felix, snatching with relief at any interruption while the infant was still quiet, opened the door to discover Mrs. Main, his housekeeper, whose rooms were directly in the rear of his own.

"If you please, Mr. Stannard," she began in her throaty voice, "the bell rang, and—"

At this inopportune moment Cyril gave a short squawk from the couch.

"Lawdy bless me, what's that?" ejaculated Mrs. Main, who fancied that Cyril had departed with his parents. Presuming upon a curiosity she could not control, she stepped into the room.

As she did so her foot came into contact with the discarded rum bottle, and she would have fallen in a tumble had not Felix clutched her firmly about the waist.

It was all very confusing. As he made to release her, Cyril, watching from the couch, began to howl.

To Felix the import of that howl was unmistakable: Cyril desired him to remain in his embarrassing position.

At a time like this when the Royes were already on their way upstairs—for so he construed Mrs. Main's interrupted message—there was really no choice left him. Any parents, hearing those cries, would not hesitate to declare murder being done to their progeny. He accordingly recaptured the waist of Mrs. Main, and despite her struggles and astonished protests, held her tightly.

Cyril immediately ceased his howls.

It was a minute later that a handsome, spankingly attired woman stepped in through the open doorway.

"I came right up, Felix, without waiting to—" she began, but at the first glimpse of the tableau before her, she brought up her sentence with a jerk of amazement.

She was no other than George Stannard's wife, Felix's fast, fashionable sister-in-law.

"Why—why!" she cried incoherently.

"My dear Laura," stammered Felix, "you don't understand the situation. I—I—it's hard to explain. I am holding Mrs. Main to keep Cyril quiet. He will cry out as soon as I release her . . . Watch. I will show you."

He withdrew his embracing arms from Mrs. Main's waist. A heavy silence hung in the air; Cyril abstractedly sucked his thumb.

Mrs. Main stole towards the door as from a vigilant madman.

Then Felix turned to the infant.

"You nasty little treacherous cad!" he cried. "I hope you hang!"

No one can be so hard on vice as the vicious.

Laura Stannard drew herself up with a fine hauteur.

"You have just given me an insight into your character, Felix," she said in her ironic, lashing voice, "that I shall not forget. I am glad that your evil bent has been revealed, and the fact that you have been drinking—your breath is astounding—doesn't excuse it. Oh, you have deceived George and myself cleverly all these years! I hope in future—if I should ever see you—you will put aside your hypocrisy."

"Laura!" cried Felix imploringly.

"Don't attempt to answer. I suppose you have some plausible explanation. No doubt you would really like to pretend that the child there is a foundling or something of the sort. Well, let me assure you that anyone would know you for its father . . . Good evening!"

"But—" screamed Felix, and the

word was severed from the sequence of an hysterical sentence by the quick slam of the door.

Felix gave up the battle.

He was tired, too utterly worn to sensitize delicately this final disaster.

Even Cyril seemed a little sobered at what he had wrought.

The pompous little bachelor opened a humidor and selected a cigar. This was an hour in which tobacco might partially quiet his throbbing nerves. When, as he lit it and blew the first billowy rings, he saw that Cyril was attempting to snatch it from him, he was not startled. Wearily he lifted the lid, drew forth another, and handed it to the child.

III

Cyril, clutching the cigar with all five fingers, poked one end into the corner of his mouth, and held it there for a moment of parody. Then his cries began to rise once more to their shattering crescendo. Felix really didn't care; he was too stunned to object; but some subconscious call of will must have prompted him to play his tragedy to its final curtain.

From a lower shelf of his desk he took out the plush box of poker chips which he had not used since years ago when he was a gay and thoughtless fellow in his twenties. In a card compartment of the box was a miniature roulette-wheel, a toy that had been satirically sent him by George one birthday not far distant. (Oh, happy, happy time when it was only satiric!)

It was for this little striped disc which whirled like a top in its tin container and rolled a tiny metal sphere over its cups that Cyril had preference. The poker chips, the card deck he scattered carelessly to the floor, but for his fingers and his eyes the roulette-wheel had a sure fascination.

Felix was at first languid, then interested: he had in him a spark of the gambling spirit. A vague system of play seemed to spring up between the child and the man; and Felix, like a gentle maniac, conducted a monologue in a lifeless voice.

"See here, I'll stake that watch of mine—not that you won't get it anyway, you mucker!—that this time it stops on seven. Is that fair? . . . Lost, by George! . . . All right, all right, I'm not going to object. You needn't start to yell . . . There, you cheated, I saw you . . . Don't try to tell me that! Do you think I'm blind?"

. . . When Felix, with half his possessions verbally forfeited, heard the click of a key in the lock, he was too dazed to inquire into the disturbance. First the head of Mrs. Main, quite fiery with colour, protruded into the doorway and stared for evidences of crime; this drew back, the door slid open, and Horatio Royes and Susan Royes, apparently warned, advanced cautiously into the room.

What they noted was this: Felix sitting cross-legged on the floor before the couch with the nub of the roulette-wheel between his fingers; Cyril following the progress of the hazard with engrossed eyes and a thick cigar clutched firmly in his hand; an empty rum bottle lying in a litter of poker chips and playing cards; the fumes of liquor; a fat red book of *Rabelais* emblazoned shamelessly on its cover; and enveloping all, an atmosphere of shameless viciousness.

Cyril gazed up. Another might have declared it his intention to exclaim, "Daa. Hello!"

But to Felix, what he seemed to utter was a calm coupling of expletives: "Daaam! Hell'!"

With a moan of horror, Mrs. Royes rushed forward and caught Cyril in her arms.

She wheeled on the unfortunate Felix.

"You monster!" she cried. "You unspeakable monster!"

Felix rose vaguely to his feet.

"Madame," he said in his best manner, "you do me an injustice. You—"

He hesitated, and then suddenly his whole shocked protest, his defense, his reaction, found outlet in the swift words of a Phillipic.

"Is it not enough," he demanded, "that I should be tormented, ruined by slanderous tongues and wicked misconceptions? Why should you now heap further accusations upon me? Believe me, my friends, the embryo criminal in your arms will destroy you as he has me. I have lived today an experience such as I have never lived before. That evil creature has undermined my character, blasted my reputation, despoiled me of my valuables, lied, cheated, tricked and tortured me! As I stand here, you, Horatio Royes, and you, Susan Royes, will see the day come when you will retain no shred of character if you continue to live with that human reptile!"

Mrs. Royes caught her husband by the arm, and fled for the doorway.

She turned for a parting word.

"And this," she cried, "this is how you have abused our confidence. Monster! And we hoped—we believed—that Cyril might exert upon you a good influence!"

* * * * * * * *

Mr. Felix Stannard, at the present hour, reads the daily papers with a meticulous attention. He is expectant of a report of the Royes' divorce. That, he is sure, is only a matter of time.

THE SKEPTIC

By John Fitzgerald

PAPA Satan was smiling.

For years he had employed his every art to pierce the potent protective barrier of clean thoughts and fine resolves and noble ambitions which enveloped the young man's soul; and always he had failed ignominiously.

But tonight Papa Satan was smiling.

A myriad of devilkins, the pick of Hell's working force, had employed their subtlest stratagems by day and night to bring about the downfall of the youth; and still he was honest and clean and happy.

But tonight Papa Satan was smiling.

Papa Satan had overheard a woman whisper to the young man: "I love you, dear. But we must resolve to remain nothing but good friends. Really, I couldn't spoil my husband's life."

BEFORE a man can be an accomplished liar he must be a gentleman. Before a man can be an accomplished gentleman he must be a liar.

A MUSICALE: A gathering of women, with, perhaps, a few men, who gossip to music.

TO be popular nowadays a man must admit that he is as cheap as the rest of the mob.

THE GOLDEN GULL

By William Rose Benét

TREES whispered promises,
Clouds were glory-hung;
Every bird—or girl—I heard
Spoke a sacred tongue.

Rivers streamed like tears away,
Tears of sharp delight.
The summer moon pearly—soon
Consecrated night.

Every mountain was God's throne,
The seas with splendid sound
Chanted slowly something holy—
Something still unfound.

Lustrous eyes hid their lies . . .
Ah, the friends one knew!
You—you know this was so.
'Twas quite the same with you!

Thus you walked your rose-ways
When life was beautiful . . .
And so I talked in those days—
And was a golden gull.

Now I know it isn't so;
Yes, I know the worst:
Man, alone, stands up like stone,—
Man by Man accursed. . . .

Yet, when each leaf bright and brief
Bears its Autumn stain,—
When through woods' Spring solitudes
Sweeps the silver rain,—

When a star falls fair and far,
A child's laugh ripples free,—
I'm again away from men
Winged with mystery. . . .

Dark eyes of the mistress lost,
Rose-wreaths round the skull,—
Ah, the spell too strange to tell . . .
Ah, the golden gull . . . !

THE PROFESSIONAL AMATEUR

By G. Vere Tyler

SHE had asked herself the question many times of late, but it was only this morning that the answer came. It was in the affirmative, and while she had provoked, possibly even encouraged, it had caused a shock.

She felt called upon to repeat the question, so as to make sure. Was it possible that all those warm sentiments that had controlled her life and made for its contentment and beauty, were now lying in her heart cold and dead waiting to be buried?

She almost laughed, a little bitterly 'tis true, at the very idea that she, Violet Bainbridge, was no longer to look upon herself as a sentimental woman, one who found joy in the superfluous things of life, those unnecessary adjuncts, simply because they pleased, lent one gentle thoughts, like the wild flowers that bloom aimlessly off the beaten track.

It filled her with a kind of horror of herself.

What was she to do with this cold woman who was confessedly dead to sentiment?

How was she to associate with such an one—go about with her?

She had never liked that kind of persons; never been able to affiliate with them. She was one who had found joy in those whom others called sentimental fools. These, it seemed, had been able to hypnotize her into the belief that they were wise. And how she had expended herself upon them—people who attracted or interested her. Perhaps that was what had killed her sentiments—they had disappointed her. Always in some way the people she had known had either hurt or failed her.

It had gradually been dawning upon her—of course, many had told her so, too—that she was an idealist, that the people she had admired—she had gone quite mad over some—were but reflections of her own mind: what she herself had supplied them with to answer the demand of her own nature for satisfying companionship.

An acquaintance of hers had been reiterating to her recently that she was a bit upset over the fact that Allie, her little son, was developing traits like those of his father which certainly had nearly broken her heart. But her husband had been dead several years now, and Allie—why, Allie was only ten—was a baby still. How could she mind what *he* did?

All during the afternoon, after her nebulous thoughts of some time had taken form and given her the answer that henceforth sentiment as far as *she* was concern was dead, she had been depressed.

She thought of sending Allie off to school and retiring from the world to live in her books and her music—even of going to the country to be alone with nature. She could glorify things there; idealize them all she liked—the trees and flowers, and running waters and sunsets. *They* would never disappoint. Oh! how beautiful the country was when one was like her, hard and cold, with no more use for people—people who were too much for her, who hurt her so, who—and tears filled her eyes.

Nevertheless, she allowed her maid to dress her for the evening's entertainment—a *musicale* it happened to be—at the home of a close friend.

During the dressing hour her maid had given her more than one fleeting curious glance. There was none of her usual pleasantry during this function,

none of that little eagerness about a certain flower to be worn, or a jewel to match this or that, things that she had never hesitated to confide to Susette made her happy.

The girl, not knowing that her mistress was dead to sentiment, had contrived a costume that she thought would lift her to a seventh heaven. It had rose-buds and forget-me-nots woven into the meshes of the lace, and Susette had counted upon her mistress going into ecstasy over these tiny flowers.

It would have been amazing to other than Violet's maid to see her view herself so coldly in this lovely costume of such ethereal intent. And what was even more surprising—she declined to wear it at all, and had the girl—disappointed French girls can be sullen—redress her in the plainest thing she had: a white crepe de chine of straight lines that made her look more like a statue than a lady starting forth to an entertainment.

Having yielded to a pale pink rose on her breast, perhaps she was never lovelier. Her grimness got no further than appearing listless. It scarcely could, considering her sensitive face, and a poet would have found her in this severe garb more inspiring than ever perhaps.

She had a great many, what she had called, hard feelings as she was motored to her friend's home, and having reinterred her sentiments on the way, she was a bit pale standing among Edythe's showy friends.

Edythe was one of those who openly declared she liked loud things, loud people, loud clothes, loud rooms, and loud music—loud anything, and she herself had a loud voice and a loud laugh. But she was beautiful and, if for nothing else, Violet loved her for that, that and her lack of deference to sham, which passes, or can be made to pass, for sincerity.

She was thinking these very things about Edythe when she felt the gaze of a man upon her, a gaze that called her eyes straight to his and held them there.

Such a gaze as this man fixed upon her can be more hopeless and full of longing than the loneliest sea that has never known a ship, and Violet seemed to see just such a sea as her eyes remained locked in his. But it was warm, her sea, as though its surface might be of heated metal.

It was this kind of being who had always awakened her sentimental nature; always filled her with the desire to reveal her passionate love of the beautiful and the sad.

She wanted to turn away, turn away her eyes anyway, but before she could do so it seemed to her that he was seeing her as a statue in some sylvan dell—she almost laughed as she thought how long since she had heard the words sylvan dell and how pretty they were—with rose-leaves showering down upon her. She even got a glimpse of a fountain in the distance and a full moon peeping over high mountains.

And then Edythe was upon her, radiant as ever, her dark eyes aglow, unsuggestive of a sorrow or a wrong in the whole world.

"In one of your sentimental dreams, Violet?" she asked, giving Violet the little shock that she always hated to admit Edythe's voice and high-pressure vitality did.

"In a dream, Edythe," she smiled, "but not a sentimental one. You'll be delighted, I know, to hear that I am done with sentiment!"

And she laughed.

"I would be," said Edythe with *her* hearty laugh that almost anything could call forth, "if I thought you were! I've the greatest bunch on earth here tonight," she then added merrily, "one or two artists, but mostly professional amateurs!"

"What are professional amateurs, Edythe?" smiled Violet naïvely.

"May I answer that?" inquired a gentleman who had approached in time to hear.

"Do!" exclaimed Edythe, and was off with her laugh.

"Madame," said the gentleman, who had a narrow, handsome face, cynical eyes and more cynical lips, "profes-

sional amateurs are the crockery that come imperfect from the mold. They are the defective plates that one finds piled up in the ten-cent store."

"You are satirical," said Violet, raising her pensive eyes so sweetly that he thought he had never seen her so engaging.

"It may be," he smiled, "that the professional amateurs have made me so. They are, these energetic beings whom our hostess has so admirably defined, destroyers of our peace of mind, our pleasure, for instance, on an occasion of this kind. It is they who teach one cynicism! With nothing to offer but the ability to imitate, they are always clamoring for our attention. They are, as I have said, the imperfect ones who unblushingly flaunt their imperfections; distorted beings, deaf and dumb and blind to art, but with the aspirations of the artist. By the side of them the actual failures at the game, those who give up and go under, sink into insignificance."

Violet's look of interest was an invitation to any speaker to continue talking. She was one of those whom ideas startle, who easily find people wonderful.

Her companion noted this look which, in his estimation, was a woman's best offering to his sex.

"Have you ever," he asked, manifesting the gracious manner she invariably won from men, "seen pleasure reflected upon the countenances of those necessitated, as we shall be presently, to be attentive to their—do you object to the word—stunts?"

Violet smiled, of course, and he went on energetically. "I have not! At their best or worst they provoke curiosity and suppressed amusement only, or—disdain. Is it not so?"

"If it *is* so," said Violet, whose face had grown as sensitive as though she were still sentimental, "are they not pathetic?"

"My dear lady," and they took the lounge Violet's glance had suggested, "I do not know what they are. Pathetic they may be, but not to me! I know that they exist; exist here to-night behind that curtain—that they exist everywhere, from mountain-top to seashore, from village to large city. I have never been anywhere that I did not discover them lurking. There are the lively ones who look at you superciliously; the sad ones who look at you suspiciously; the hopeless ones who flit by pretending not to see you, and not one who has not an eye to your pocketbook. They are in classes that may be catalogued from two dollars to a quarter. For the privilege of viewing them and whatever in the way of kicking up their heels, making leaps—it is the male who leaps—flirting their skirts—it is the female, of course, who flirt their skirts—or shrieking or frantically declaiming you are expected to pony up!"

"The poor things!" said Violet, who was no doubt expected to laugh.

"The poor things! Why are *we* not the poor things?" demanded her companion freezingly. "Why am I not—I who am so sensitive to them? I knew they were here to-night when I reached the front stoop! I sensed them! I hate them! They are the only people to whom I have ever been cruel and penurious. I never applaud them, and if I saw one perishing—well, then I would applaud!"

"But," said Violet, with a slightly tilted head as she smiled, "you are only making fun."

"Making fun, and with that line behind the curtain?"

Violet rather liked his laugh; she thought it a bit callous, but, what meant so much to Violet, cultured.

He bent to her as he said in his own, now to her, amusing way:

"Concerning them my only possible fun would be to endow an asylum for them where they would all be forced to perform for each other! I can assure you they, these curious entertainers, are the crazy ones of earth who can only go around a circle and never develop into anything! They remain what they are—clowns!"

"If that is true," said Violet very

tenderly, "and if," she added quickly, "I was not dead to all sentiment, I would feel very, very sorry for them!"

"You will excuse me," she then said, rising, "won't you? I have," and she smiled as only Violet could, "an appointment with myself in the conservatory before the curtain goes up."

"You are going," said her companion rising, too, and lifting a finger, "to escape them!"

II

As she moved off, the man who had held her gaze on her arrival stepped up to her.

"Madame," he said, "I am one of those whom your friend has described. I could not help," he added apologetically, "but hear. May I accompany you to the conservatory?"

Violet thought there must be a fire burning behind his dark eyes, they glowed so.

"Why, yes," she said in her gentle, halting way, "of course."

"You must not think," she added as they stepped inside a door that enclosed them in a moist atmosphere among flowers, "that I agree with him!"

"And yet," said the man, "he was correct. We *are* the imperfect pottery cast adrift. We *are* forced to attempt to express what we cannot express. I shall play the violin tonight imperfectly, and yet my soul will perform upon it perfectly."

Said Violet, "I beg that you will not arouse my sympathies, for—for I am a being dead to sentiment."

Said the man, "That is strange."

Violet thought she had never heard a man speak so simply, and the words were very simple, too.

She wondered why she should feel ashamed, why a blush should spring to her face.

"My sentiments," she felt called upon to explain a bit eagerly, "all died today. Since I came here tonight I've been erecting monuments to them!"

She laughed very sweetly at what she said, but she did not feel it to be a genuine laugh.

He met it by a reassuring smile.

"And do you expect," he asked tenderly, "to go on living since you have buried your sentiments?"

As he spoke he seated her beside him on one of Edythe's very beautiful couches with cushions in many shades of green, and for some reason Violet could not answer.

It was just as though she were in the sylvan dell where it had seemed to her his gaze again placed her.

She hardly dared speak.

After quite a silence, he said in a low, intimate voice:

"You would not like these flowers without their perfumes, would you?"

"Indeed not!" exclaimed Violet.

"They struggle to give out what they have like we poor professional amateurs, don't they?" he asked with the gladdest smile she had ever seen—a smile that seemed to her very sad, too—sympathy she thought turned into a smile.

"Oh! they do," said Violet, actually clasping her hands. And then she thought her friend—Violet called him that—looked a bit weary.

"It's all pure rank sentiment though on their part, isn't it?"

"I never thought about it that way," said Violet thoughtfully.

"What would you think of these flowers," he persisted, "if for some reason of their own—maybe because they had been hurt!—they were to withhold from us their sweet perfumes—their sentiments?"

"I would think," said Violet, "they were wicked!"

"And so should I," he returned, giving her the same look he had when he first saw her.

It had such a strange effect upon Violet that it made her heart beat a little. She almost felt a gasp in her throat, as when we come unexpectedly upon a wondrous scene.

Quite a long silence followed, as though he were allowing her these emotions, a silence during which all the flowers mingled their odorous sentiments and kept so still Violet almost

thought she could hear them breathe.

"My dear child!" he surprised her by exclaiming and laying a hand upon her shoulder.

She could take no offence, for in the moment she felt that an old, old man was speaking. And yet, too, as she gazed at him timidly he was a very young child. He was curiously puzzling and—it had not occurred to her before—strangely, oh! so strangely beautiful.

"What?" she asked finally in a kind of rapture, and marvelling at the happiness she felt.

"Mortal life," he said, releasing her, "should have but one meaning—the battle to maintain our sentiments. That is all there is to life. Sentiments are the sails of our being. Without them we must flounder and go down."

"Do you really think so?" asked Violet.

"I know so, and we poor professional amateurs your friend so derided are the real strugglers—the ones who brave the shoals of poverty, even of ridicule, to hold on to our sentiments."

"That," said Violet, "must be very wonderful! I think you," she added, peering at him, "are very wonderful!"

"I have been often told so," he answered, his eyes gathering an amused light, something that seemed laughing at their pain.

This smile caused Violet to catch her breath; it even caused the blood to mount to her brow.

It was familiar to her.

She grew pale as she moved away from him.

"You are not a professional amateur!" she exclaimed. "You are Perovski, the famous violinist!"

"Are you sure?" His smile was so beautiful it looked to her like all she once thought love would be—tender, compassionate, glorifying.

Still, Violet felt a bit resentful.

He should not have attempted to fool her.

"Of course," she said vehemently, "I am sure. I have never heard you play, but I know you by your pictures! *Why* did you call yourself a professional amateur?"

"I was thinking for the moment of God!" he answered vaguely.

He was very bold, this man, for he took her hand up and looked at it before continuing.

When he had returned it to her as some precious gift:

"We are, I fear, all but amateurs in His sight. If God were without sentiment we would no doubt appear in His eyes as Mrs. Lockwood's performers do in our friend's of a little while ago."

"I will always love them—all of them," exclaimed Violet, "after this!"

"Including me?" The amused light actually shone in his eyes and Violet felt a bit confused.

He saw this and added quickly:

"I'm going to ask a favor of you."

"What?" asked Violet, wondering that the greatest musician of his time should ask something of her.

"That you write me a note every day next week. Seven notes in all—one each day."

"But why?" she questioned, amazed.

"I want to translate them into music for you!"

"But," asked Violet, startled and a bit awed, "could you—would you?"

"I could," he answered almost playfully, "and I fancy into very beautiful music, but on second thought, I think I had better not."

'Oh! but why?" asked Violet, with tears in her voice as she clasped her hands.

"Because you are dead to sentiment, and that would be sentiment of the very worst kind, wouldn't it?"

He smiled almost mischievously, a smile Violet wished she could catch and keep forever.

"But it would make me wildly, deliriously happy!" she exclaimed.

A servant came at this moment to announce that the violinist was wanted.

He rose, bowed low and coldly, and left.

For a moment Violet felt the world had come to an end. She was as one robbed of shining jewels, or cast into

darkness after a blinding light. And then as she recovered herself it was all quite plain. A great genius had condescended to converse with her and give her a glimpse of his soul. To Violet he seemed a messenger from heaven to restore to her, in all their palpitating youth and glory, her discarded buried sentiments. She felt like this once when she was a little girl and leaped over fields after butterflies. It was just like that!

A little laugh escaped her and tears gushed to her eyes. She then sat quite a while given over to her emotions. Finally she sprang up and, half stumbling, dashed through the flowers to hear him play.

And all the while as she listened he seemed her messenger from heaven, and through blinding tears and a beating heart she was hugging her sentiments to her and vowing never, never to let them get away.

THE LAKE

By H. K. Wells

THE small lake in Rambeau's delightful estate is a marvel of beauty, for Rambeau is a connoisseur. Its smooth surface is a wondrous mirror in which sky and landscape become transformed into a beauty almost unearthly. Magnificent water lilies dot its azure surface like flowers of pearl and gold floating in a sea of topaz. Its sides are fringed with silken grasses of many hues. Sloping gently down to its tranquil waters is a beach of diamond pebbles. Beautiful fishes of emerald and scarlet dart swiftly through the opal depths, now and then leaping into the air in showers of shimmering jewels.

Its beauty lacks but one thing. If Rambeau's fat, bloated body were lying in the mosses at its bottom, it would be perfect.

I COULD FORGIVE

By John McClure

LOVE is so very hard to bear,
Mad Love on his own pleasure bent,
And yet I think I could forgive
If he were different.

I could forgive Love's wantonness,
Forgive that he is blind,
I could forgive Love everything
If only Love were kind.

ALTESSE

By Jacques des Gachons

VIVE émotion dans les salons militaires de Blangy-sur-Moselle. Le nouveau colonel a fait savoir qu'il recevrait le mardi suivant. Les officiers sont déjà habitués à leur nouveau chef, qui porte un grand nom, mais dont la gaillarde familiarité a su les conquérir. C'est un vrai Français et un vrai soldat, sachant dire tout haut ce qu'il pense et ne mâchant ni ses critiques ni ses compliments. Mais il n'y a pas que le colonel à qui il va falloir présenter officiellement ses devoirs, il y a la colonelle. . . .

Or, si le colonel est un simple marquis, fils d'un maréchal, il est vrai, mais enfin d'une noblesse abordable, presque sans façon, la colonelle est, elle, de lingée royale, tout simplement.

On l'a vue passer dans la rue et, ma foi, elle avait fort grand air. De haute taille, comme son père, qui, sous un nom d'emprunt, se battit si vaillamment en 1870, le nez de sa race, les yeux bleus, elle marchait vite, sans hésitation et comme si elle connaissait la petite ville par cœur.

Des officiers, déjà, l'avaient saluée; mais il n'y a rien de plus aisé qu'un salut militaire—on le prolonge à la mesure du respect, voilà tout—tandis qu'une visite ne s'improvise pas, en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit d'une visite à une Altesse Royale.

On tint donc conseil.

* * *

Le capitaine B. . ., chez qui avait lieu la réunion, était d'avis qu'on devait donner à la colonelle son titre de *marquise,* la femme prenant le titre du mari.

La femme d'un lieutenant, moderne et décidée, s'écria:

—Mais enfin, cela ne se fait plus. Appelons-la *madame,* tout simplement.

—Une vraie grande dame, en effet, surenchérit la femme d'un commandant, l'est par ses manières et non par son nom.

—Sans doute, mesdames, dit le capitaine D. . ., mais en tout ceci, il ne s'agit pas d'elle, mais de nous. Ce n'est pas sa conduite que nous avons à régler, mais la nôtre. Or, il n'est pas douteux que nous allons nous trouver en face de la petite-fille de nos rois. Son titre d'*altesse,* elle le possède par droit de naissance. Nous devons lui parler à la troisième personne. . . .

—A la troisième personne! s'exclama la femme du lieutenant qui avait déjà dit son opinion. Je ne pourrai jamais. . . . Alors, nous allons nous exprimer comme nos bonnes. . . . C'est charmant. . . .

—Ma chérie, interrompit son mari qui commençait à s'effrayer, l'usage de la troisième personne n'est pas exclusivement réservé aux domestiques; on emploie la troisième personne lorsqu'on s'adresse à un ministre, au Président de la République, à un souverain étranger, que sais-je!

—Je l'admets. Mais, justement, il ne s'agit ni du Président de la République, ni d'un souverain étranger, mais de la femme du colonel. C'est ridicule de vouloir nous imposer des habitudes "désuètes."

—Il ne s'agit pas d'habitude, mais de tradition. . . .

—. . . surannée.

—Voyons, voyons, mesdames, examinons les choses posément, prononça un commandant. En ma qualité de doyen de cette petite assemblée, vous me permettrez bien de diriger les débats.

Qu'est-ce que nous voulons? Nous singulariser?

—Non.

—Lui parler comme il convient à des hommes du monde?

—C'est cela.

—Vous voyez, mesdames. La question est des plus simples. Nous voulons lui parler comme elle a l'habitude qu'on lui parle.

—Seulement, nous ne s a v o n s comment on a l'habitude de lui parler.

—Nous n'avons qu'à nous renseigner.

—Près de qui?

—Près du colonel, cela n'est pas douteux!

—Bravo!

—Je vous propose d'envoyer en mission près de lui les capitaines B... et D... qui ont exprimé des avis contraires. . . .

L'assemblée, soulagée, s'empressa d'accepter et, le lendemain, après le rapport, les deux capitaines demandèrent à leur chef "un instant d'entretien particulier."

—Je suis à vous, messieurs. De quoi s'agit-il?

Sa cravache sous le bras, le képi déjà planté un tout petit peu sur l'oreille, le colonel brûlait d'aller faire sa promenade apéritive. Les ambassadeurs étaient un peu troublés. Ils ne trouvaient plus leurs mots. C'était à qui ne parlerait pas le premier. . . .

—Si difficile que ça? demanda le colonel en s'asseyant sur l'angle d'une table.

—Oh! non, dit enfin le capitaine B... Voici, mon colonel, nous venions vous demander des nouvelles de la marquise. . . .

—De ma femme? Elle va très bien, je vous remercie. Vous savez qu'elle vous attend demain de pied ferme. Elle sera de service dans son salon de quatre à sept. . . .

—Justement, à ce propos, mon colonel, reprit le capitaine D..., nous aurions besoin d'une petite consultation. Vous qui avez plus que nous l'habitude des cours, je veux dire du monde, du grand monde. . . .

—Moi, l'habitude du. . . . Vous me flattez. . . . Enfin, voyons. . . .

—Est-ce qu'une femme de haute noblesse garde, en se mariant, ses propres titres, ou bien prend-t-elle le titre de son mari? . . .

—Mais qu'est-ce que cela peut bien vous faire? Vous avez fait un pari?

—Non, mon colonel. Il s'agit de la réception de demain.

—Chez moi?

—Oui, mon colonel. . . . Nous voudrions savoir quelles sont les habitudes en face de la colonelle. Nos collègues et ces dames sont embarrassés. Doit-on l'appeler tout bonnement "madame"? Préfère-t-elle "marquise" ou bien "altesse"?

Le colonel sauta à bas de la table, se mit à rire et, saluant les deux capitaines, penauds, il sortit en s'écriant, car il avait enfin compris:

—Marguerite? Elle s'en f...!

DAISIES

By John Russell McCarthy

A HAPPY summer picnic:
A hundred little girls,
White frocks and yellow sashes
Making gay the fields.

THE CUT-RATE MIND AND THE PREMIUM SEAT

By George Jean Nathan

JUST as one dislikes instinctively the sort of person whose essay to be genial and popular is overly assiduous, so does the mob audience similarly fail to be impressed by the sort of play whose effort to stroke its fur is too transparent. Like many another, I admit to having believed, and often written, the contrary. But more lately the conclusion has been harvested that in order to achieve a signal box-office prosperity a play of the genre designated as popular must indulge itself in an *escamoterie* somewhat more suave and cagey.

Mr. Lee Wilson Dodd's "Pals First," from a fiction by Francis Perry Elliott, to no small degree loses its audience by virtue of its unremitting effort to please that audience. One has from it a constant impression of the manuscript leaning over the footlights, fervently shaking hands with the audience, affectionately calling the audience "old man" and giving it Masonic slaps on the back. And while a casual deduction from the popular, or mob, plays might seem to indicate that this is a fruit-bearing tactic, a closer scrutiny discloses to the situation a rather different countenance.

The long line at a box-office window means less a play that is pleasing an audience than an audience that is pleasing a play. When a playwriter with the box-office as his sole aim addresses himself to the composition of a dollar-distilling stage exhibit, his first thought is not that church bells ringing on Christmas Eve and bringing repentance to a wayward youth will arouse the nobler impulses of his audience, but that his audience is so given through habit to remitting its familiarity with the situation that the church bells will constitute as fetching a box-office springle as ever. A mob play is successful to the degree that its audience is charitable in forgiving its banalities. The success of such a piece as "Turn to the Right" is certainly not founded on the circumstance that its plot concerns the mediaeval lifting of a mortgage off the old farm so much as on the circumstance that its audiences are pleased to overlook that squashy wheeze because of the humours with which the authors have refreshed it.

The play designed for the wholesale consumption of the horde is written not from the stage to the audience, but from the audience to the stage. It must not please its audience so much as its audience must please it. Winchell Smith, one of the authors of "Turn to the Right," and one of the shrewdest of native box-office mesmerists, recently pointed this most acutely while touching on the case of Hermann Bahr's "The Master." This estimable play, argued Smith, pleased its audiences, but did not make money. Had he written the play, said Smith, he would have made of it a stunning box-office success by having a woman rush out on the stage at one point in the traffic, slobber around on the floor at the great surgeon's feet and beseech him with loud wails and whifflings to save her little child's life.

This may sound very silly, but the truth remains that Smith is a clever man and unquestionably knows what he is talking about. And where Bahr, an

artist, wrote a play that merely pleased its audience and so lost money, Smith, a business man, would have written an audience that pleased its play and so probably made a shapely fortune. For certainly the so-called sympathetic situation described by Smith as constituting the necessary injection of box-office strychnine does not belong in the play —Smith plainly granted as much: it belongs in the audience. The situation, indeed, is less a situation than it *is* an audience. Originally a thing of the stage, it has in one form or another rolled down the years like a snowball—growing, growing—and has become a thing of the auditorium, a veritable part of the popular theater-going crowd. This traditional situation and all its many traditional fellows have been transmuted, through endless and ceaseless repetitions, into so many component parts of the popular theater audience. And it is thus that the popular playwright of today must compose less a play than an audience.

For years, an audience has been accustomed upon seating itself to slide its hats into the wire holders under its seats. Mr. Ames' Little Theater has been open now some four years, and its audiences have come to know perfectly well there are no such holders beneath its seats, yet every night one may see the auditorium force of habit still vainly essaying to adjust its hats in the holders that aren't there. The group of persons who go to make up a theater audience have become, by virtue of protracted theatrical attendance, less a group of persons than a group of habits, of traditions, of *situations*. What goes to our popular theaters today is therefore not so much a group of persons as a group of stereotyped dramatic situations disposed to behold themselves in process of reminiscence by a group of professional actors. The auditoriums of our popular playhouses no longer contain human beings, but instead so many codicils to the will, eleventh hour acquisitions of the proxies, redemptions through the purity of country maidens, rapes by drunken German corporals, and unmaskings of the Earl.

But just as in all reminiscence there is small pleasure for the man looking backward save he adorn the past with wistful little fibberies as unction to his vanity, and just as his pleasurable glow would promptly melt away were the fair lady of his memories suddenly to burst in upon his reflective solitude and amiably establish that his wistful little self-fibberies were not fibberies at all, but rather forgotten facts—just so, and in probably equally evasive paradox, must the play in these circumstances not flatter the audience but must rather the audience flatter itself. And flatter itself by fooling itself. The audience must pretend: it must read into the old stage situations elements that are not, and doubtless were never, there. It must pretend, with a charitable warmth, that for the time being it is not familiar with the Cinderella story . . . the inevitable arrival of the Ninth Cavalry at the stockade in the nick of time . . . the you-don't-mean—oh-my-poor-brave-little-woman impending baby that is destined to reunite the hero and heroine . . . the ultimate revealment of the smug hypocrisy of the deacon . . .

The more or less prevalent notion that an audience at a popular play is interested in the solution of the plot of the play is surely a ridiculous one. What the audience is interested in is not what will happen, but what won't happen. One will quickly grant, for example, that no civilized audience under the broad heavens expects for an instant that the leading lady in "Mr. Wu" or "The Conquerors" or "Tosca" or any such play will be ravished on the stage by the villain before its very eyes. Why, then, is the audience interested? It is interested, simply enough, because a theater audience is interested ever more in the preventive of an act than in the consummation of that act. It is not the hero's triumph over obstacles that intrigues the mob—the mob knows the hero will triumph when it buys its tickets—it is the obstacles themselves. The popular play, in short, is that play

which most adroitly employs the greatest number of semi-colons in its narration of an old story.

What suspensive interest might attach to such a mob play as "The Man Who Came Back" is deleted from the play before the curtain's rise by the title. What suspensive interest might attach to such a mob specimen as "Experience" is deleted from the play immediately the audience looks first at its program and detects that the final scene is laid in the same sweet duchy as the prologue. To argue, therefore, that the large commercial prosperity of these plays is due considerably to an interest in the solution of their stories is akin to a belief that one is less amused at the spectacle of a fat gentleman falling on the slippery pavement than in watching him get up again.

To make the audience please the popular play it is necessary for the popular playwright to dramatize not the audience's best impulses and emotions, as claimed by the professors, but the audience's worst impulses and emotions. That play which capitalizes, approves and justifies most effectively the evil side of a mob audience's moral nature is the play that makes the fortune for its sponsors. "Alias Jimmy Valentine," "Officer 666" and "Turn to the Right" capitalized and countenanced the mob audience's more or less repressed impulse to break the eighth commandment and steal . . . "Madame X" and "On Trial," like certain of the Sardou plays, the audience's periodic impulse to break the sixth and kill . . . "Marie-Odile," "Romance" and "The Lily," to break the seventh and commit charming and forgivable adulteries . . . "The Unchastened Woman," the ninth . . . "Mary Jane's Pa," the fifth . . . "The Great Lover" the covetous tenth—and "Kismet" (a rare combination of the first-rate and popular play), the whole lot from one to ten . . .

A popular audience, like an old bachelor or a young girl, likes to be told, not that it is good, but that it is bad. And the audience, figuratively speaking, likes to tell it back again to the play. And so it comes about that the history of the popular, or mob, play is—with of course the usual reservations—a catalogue, not as is generally maintained, of virtuous loves and holy preachments and scowlings on sin so much as one of crooks, seducers, swindlers and liars.

The popular play—the play manufactured to make money—as we have come in the last fifteen years to know it must not punish sin: it must condone it, or approve it, or forgive it. Your popular stage hero who is a swindler is not sent to jail (as he was in old days, when he was the villain), but instead is rewarded at eleven o'clock with the hand of a rich and personable country lass and the sight of an illuminated trolley car running along the back drop. Your professional seducer (the one-time odious Jem Dalton, but now the bewitching Jean Paurel) no longer expiates his sins in the cold moonlit waters beneath the Brooklyn Bridge. Today, as the final curtain descends on him to loud hand-clapping, he is planning still another assignation with a mobile married lady. And your popular stage hero, the thief. Fifteen years ago, eleven o'clock saw him halted by the gendarmes at the left upper entrance just as he was about to make his escape, and packed off, heavily braceleted to Sing Sing. Today, he makes a speech that causes all the ladies out front to sniffle, is wistfully shaken by the hand by the young woman whom he has robbed, and leaves gracefully by the French window for a life of ease and luxury in the Riviera.

Had Jimmy Valentine been sent back to prison at the end of the play, would the play have succeeded? The character was quite as guilty of crime at that time as in the beginning of the play; but the astute Mr. Armstrong knew his popular audience too well to commit so unforgivable a *faux pas*. Would "Cheating Cheaters" have been the popular success it is had its thief hero been sentenced to prison instead of to matrimony with the pretty leading lady? Consider the morals and ethics of that prodigious success "Within the Law." Re-

flect on the morals and ethics of "Wallingford"—of eight out of every ten of the great popular successes of late years.

In the matter of the reminiscence upon the stage of the stereotyped situations that, metaphorically, go to constitute the popular theater audience, it is essential to box-office affluence, as has already been pointed out, that these situations be not too literally repeated. The audience resents a too faithful plagiarism of itself. Just as a writer is wrathful over a direct plagiarism of his work but subtly and not inconsiderably flattered over a mere imitation of it, so will an audience be displeased at a direct transcription of its favourite situations and, contrariwise, greatly pleased at an imitative treatment. "Sis Hopkins," brought into New York today with Miss Rose Melville, would doubtless be a dismal failure. But when Miss Laurette Taylor brings it back to town and calls it "Peg o' My Heart" it achieves an almost stupefying popular triumph.

I have observed that a popular audience resents a too palpable stroking of its fur. Though it may not at first glance so appear, it is yet probably true that the success of the plays written by Mr. William Hodge is due to the tactful hocus-pocus which that gentleman visits upon them. For all that a lot of impudent boys like myself have in the past written to the contrary, one knows perfectly well that the average American is by no means so inconceivably vulgar a buck as he is represented to be in the person of the Hodge heroes. Mr. Hodge is unquestionably aware of the fact himself and, by so exaggerating the vulgarities of the average American (which is to say the popular audience), he wins his audiences' golden hosannahs through the simple stratagem of leading them in this essential sly and oblique manner to believe that they are above the average. He permits each native son in his audience to compare himself with an English nobleman—and to the native son's large advantage—by the left-handed trick of hiring a thirty-five-dollar-a-week actor to play the nobleman, permitting the actor to go the limit in dressing the part the way the actor thinks it ought be dressed and so making the nobleman appear to the unsuspecting and subtly larded native son approximately as regal as a shoe.

Mr. Hodge, further, buys twenty-dollar evening gowns for his chic society belles and so with a shrewd left hand similarly flatters his fatuous patrons among the female proletariat. The fellow, say what you will, is clever. He understands the palate of the *publikum*. He knows that the popular play cannot afford directly to flatter the mob. George M. Cohan tried the trick in his "Miracle Man" and came a cropper. George Broadhurst tried it with "What Money Can't Buy" and came a cropper as well. Study George Cohan's successes and you will find that they insult the mob, flout it, make sport of its vaunted shrewdness and acumen. "Wallingford," "Baldpate," "Hit-the-Trail Holliday" and on down the list.

And so, Mr. Dodd's play, "Pals First," will, by virtue of its continuous prostration before the popular audience's optimisms and benevolences and self-delusions, never achieve great popular success. It is a mere morality of Magnanimity, Chivalry, Honour, Loyalty, Faith, Virtue, Altruism, Self-Immolation and Handshaking told in terms of a so-called crook play. It is a "Pollyanna" without a John Pendleton. It is the Lord's Prayer rewritten by Orison Swett Marden to be interpreted by the required number of Mary Pickfords in trousers—"Abendstern" on a dozen ukeleles—the poetry of Cale Young Rice recited in unison by the sophomore class at Wellesley—Eleanor Hallowell Abbott shopping in Page and Shaw's . . .

II

When the curtain fell upon the initial performance of the Messrs. Benrimo and Rhodes' fantasy "The Willow Tree," the thought obtruded that now that these gentlemen had had their play

produced, the next thing for them to do would be to write it. For it was unmistakably apparent that the manuscript had been snatched untimely from the womb; that a deal more attention should have visited upon it ere its public unscreening. That these deficiencies have to a large degree been amended in the time elapsed since the first performance may be taken for granted. For it needed no professional critical averment to indicate to authors and producers the necessary vital curtailment and compression, simplification and fillip.

And so one may readily believe, even as these sentences are being written, that this play, founded on the fancy of the fable of Nippon—the fable of the little woman whose soul went back into the willow, that her lover might be free to go forth to the glory of his nation—that this play has been made into a thing of considerable fascination and sensitiveness. To appraise it from its premature exhibition were not altogether equitable, for the intrinsic possibilities and merits of the manuscript were, even under the circumstances, too explicit. This initial performance endured for something more than three hours, and it is as patently out of the question to attempt to sustain for so extended a period the theater mood for fantasy as it is the library personal mood for the reading of poetry, however distinguished and lovely. The most beautiful and alluring things grow cloying if too unduly indulged in—whether stage fantasy, Bermuda weather, the poetry of the Irish, or kissing behind the ear.

Yet again one must bring attention both to the authors of this play and to the Messrs. Cohan and Harris, its presenters, for having brought so basically felicitous an interlude to the current Broadway diapason of whimwham and trumpery. That the effort may be somewhat more successful than the effect should not obscure entirely the point. The play, though it is composed now and again in a much too literal and Occidental key, though it misses much of the music hidden in the rustling leaves and swinging summer lanterns and lazy dim mauve twilights of its delicate and fantastical theme, is a play worth the doing. One wishes, however, that the authors, before laying to their Japanese theme, had more sympathetically sat before the memory of Umewaka Minoru; had more closely studied the "Noh"; had more greatly learned lesson from "Sotoba Komachi," "Suma Genji," "Shojo," "Kayoi Komachi" and "Tsunemasa"; had, in short, been more intimately familiar with what has been treasured for the western world by Ernest Fenollosa.

III

The commonly held opinion that it is much easier for the professional critic to compose a criticism of a bad play than a good play once again goes stark aground in the instance of Mr. E. H. Sothern's second effort at dramatic authorship, "Stranger Than Fiction." I have been sitting before my worktable for the last hour and a half cudgeling my head for a critical approach to the play, but the play is so very bad that I find myself completely baffled. And what is more, I notice that even the most ready and versatile of my colleagues have been similarly confounded. Whereas a good play, like a bad woman, holds out to one innumerable possibilities, the bad play, like the good woman, squats one tongue-tied and floundering in his chair.

When an actor attempts the negotiation of satire, a marasmus is on the world. Actors have written successful drama, comedy, burlesque, farce—but satire, the edelweiss of literature, has generally been far above their reach. And Mr. Sothern's groping has been so disastrous and productive of so dazzling a dulness and so complex a stupidity that, as I have observed, I am unable to think of anything to say about his work. It is, indeed, like asking one to describe at length one's splitting attack of facial neuralgia. Subject at intervals to the thing over many years

and having been asked in turn by some forty or fifty physicians to describe at length and intimately the sensations, impressions, symptoms and periodicity of the visitation, I have come to find that the only information I have been able to give these gentlemen is, simply if inelegantly, that it pains like hell. And, analogously, this is all I find, after an hour and thirty-five minutes, I can say about Mr. Sothern's play.

True, I might go on and employ the play to show off a bit by pointing out that the basic idea for the play, as my colleagues seem *en masse* to believe, did not begin and stop with the Messrs. Hamilton and Thomas' vastly superior and really adroit "Big Idea," which Mr. Sothern's work closely in content resembles. And I might in this way allude to Thaddeus Rittner's "Mann in Souffleur Kasten," which was done in Berlin five years ago, and to Upton Sinclair's play "The Great American Drama," which was written four years ago, and to the nimble play called "Whimsies," which was done by Mrs. Horniman's Manchester company, and to kindred compositions which have handled the same theme in either much the same or approximately the same manner. And I should thus probably be able deeply to impress the reader with my wide acquaintance with such pieces. But this would be the merest subterfuge, since a knowledge of such pleasant, but unimportant, plays means little or nothing in the critical equipment.

On the other hand, were I writing here of a worthy piece of stage composition as, for example, Miss Kummer's "Good Gracious Annabelle"—instead of a bad piece of stage composition like Mr. Sothern's "Stranger Than Fiction"—I might profitably draw a parallel between the airy, frolicsome styles of Miss Kummer in America and of Skowronnek and Blumenthal on the Continent—between "Good Gracious Annabelle" and "Grosse Rosinen," for instance—and so accomplish something critically pertinent, though it is entirely probable in the light of past experiences that the former flimsy stratagem would more profoundly impress the yokelry. (In the latter critical enterprise, which would be perfectly substantial and of good fruit, I would doubtless be said merely to have succeeded in discovering an obscure and imposing name in Skowronnek—one grants it is a piquant one—and to have juggled with it for purposes of making something of a personal splash.)

But, sitting thus at my desk for an hour and forty minutes, I come no nearer to a criticism of Mr. Sothern's play. I wrinkle my brow, I chew my pencil, I light a fresh stogie—but comes nothing. I appreciate that it is not entirely fair to Mr. Sothern or to the play merely to say his play is an overpoweringly bad play, but I confess that is really all I can think of. If Mr. Sothern thinks I owe him an apology for such a criticism as this—a sweeping condemnation without specification of the reasons for that condemnation—I herewith gladly offer it him . . . And yet, as the hands of the clock before me move along to the two-hour mark, a sound point of criticism seems to come to me. Mr. Sothern's play shows the audience a playwright building a successful play by following rigorously the formulæ set down by Professor William Archer in his manual on playmaking. That the play which the stage playwright so builds by following rigorously the formulae set down by Professor William Archer in his manual on playmaking turns out to be one of the very worst plays of the season was therefore not to be unexpected. Had this satire been intentional, another and more feastful critical tale might have here been written.

IV

An actor views a play not in terms of composite drama, but in terms of its individual roles. It is consequently not unnatural that we find that when an actor composes a play for his own use he more often than not writes a luxuriant part for himself and completely

forgets to write a play around that part. This occurs again in the instance of an exhibit called "The Brat," which Miss Maude Fulton has written for her own service. For herself, the actress has composed a role of some eighteen or nineteen thousand "sides" and, in lieu of a play, has merely hired a number of actors to come on the stage at such intervals as she is not executing a sob solo or an emotional *pas seul*, stand around and listen to the frugiferous lines she has given herself to speak. Hers is, indeed, no mere star role: it is a Milky Way!

All things considered, and in the light of analogous past adventures, it was probably not altogether peculiar that I should have approached the theater housing this exhibit with a sort of "Oh God!" air. I had heard the play was of a piece with the "Peg o' My Heart" dramaturgy: one of those horrible things in which a rough little female diamond in tatters comes into a fashionable house and wins the hearts of everyone with her lovableness and Irish wit. And I had recalled Miss Fulton some ten or twelve years ago in a music show atop Madison Square Garden—a delectable miss, I remembered, in a rakish black velvet tam-o'-shanter, navy blue reefer and short white duck skirt—and was, I confess, somewhat skeptical of the result of so toothsome a canary's dalliance with dramatic composition. But it all goes to show that one never can tell. True, the lady's play is, as I have remarked, no play at all and, true again, what there is of it is of the ingenuous sort in which the difference between the "society" characters and the commoners is indicated by having the former say "may" where the latter say "can," yet Miss Fulton has, in the instance of her own role, revealed a surprisingly quick humour of the George Cohan species, a humour that signifies its sponsor to have seen other things in the world than vaudeville shows. What is more, one of the moments of pathos is really well written. The stuff, of course, is wholly the stuff of the popular stage, but as such it is conducted with no little felicity. Give this Miss Fulton a capable collaborator and the result would be amusing popular pastime. There is something in her of the Kin Hubbard quality.

V

ELEVEN years ago, I began the publication, at the end of each theatrical season, of a catalogue of those ten plays and ten histrionic performances—male and female—which, to my way of thinking, ranked as the highest of the year. This practice was maintained until a year ago, when absence of sufficient honourable effort in the theater during the period in question made necessary a temporary discontinuance. Next month I shall once again return to the notion and shall indicate, as best I am able, the first-rate efforts of the season of 1916-1917.

SHOCKING STUFF

By H. L. Mencken

§1

MARK TWAIN, dead, promises to stir up the animals even more joyously than Mark Twain, living. The old boy left his best jokes to the last; from his tomb issue sparks that set the hair of the virgin reviewers afire. "The Mysterious Stranger" (*Harper*) is already exposed; there will come, soon or late, I daresay, a public edition of "What Is Man?" now bringing fancy prices in private; in the end, perhaps, we shall get a glimpse of that appalling piece of satire mentioned by Albert Bigelow Paine in his biography —that tale of the microbes who inhabit a man's veins, and worship him as their god, and employ priests and bishops to present their suits to him, and imagine him as dreadfully concerned about their ultra-microscopic souls, hopes, sins, aspirations and theology. . . .

How criticism in America has misestimated this colossus! How the cackling of literary wenches, male and female, has resounded around the one indubitable giant of our literature! First they sought to dismiss him as a hollow buffoon, a brother to Josh Billings and Petroleum V. Nasby. Then they made a sort of national Peck's Bad Boy of him, an ambulent Punch and Judy show for banquets and chautauquas, a William Jennings Bryan armed with a slapstick. And finally, sensing his greatness dimly, they erected him into an apologetic kind of equality with Thomas Bailey Aldrich and William Dean Howells, and issued an impertinent amnesty for the errors of his youth. What will these donkeys now answer to "The Mysterious Stranger"? What, with their grudging *imprimatur* flung into their faces, will they say of such stuff as this:

. . . a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; one who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites the poor, abused slave to worship him! . . .

Here, indeed, is food for the college professors who pipe for Optimism and a Brighter World, and denounce Dreiser for his harsh truth-telling, and apply the criteria of the Sunday school to beautiful letters. Here, having taken the viper reluctantly to their bosoms, they are stung damnably. Here a bomb goes off in the sanctuary. . . . And loaded with what? With platitudes, of course. "The Mysterious Stranger" shocks by the very process I described and exemplified last month: it turns the obvious into the scandalous by stating it plainly. The preface to "What Is Man?" dated February, 1905, puts Mark himself on the stand in confirmation:

The studies for these papers were begun twenty-five or twenty-seven years ago. The papers were written seven years ago. I have examined them once or twice per year since

and found them satisfactory. I have just examined them again, and am still satisfied that they speak the truth. Every thought in them has been thought (and accepted as unassailable truth) by millions upon millions of men—and concealed, kept private. Why did they not speak out? Because they dreaded (*and could not bear*) the disapproval of the people around them. Why have not I published? The same reason has restrained me, I think. I can find no other.

More, the same reason still halted Mark at the brink of his new resolve. He printed "What Is Man?" but only in a private edition, limited to 250 copies, and never offered for sale. The book, in fact, is still unpublished. Stray copies of the private edition, coming into the second-hand book-shops, fetch $45 or $50. Even a pirated English reprint, issued by the Rationalist Press Association in 1910, now brings $10 or more. Mr. Paine tells us something about the inner springs of this diffidence. Mrs. Clemens was a very religious woman, and Mark hesitated to violate her pruderies; after her death he was equally disinclined to forget them. The rest he tells himself. He knew how hard his fight for position had been; he knew how long it had taken him to live down the sacrileges of his youth; he knew what direful penalties outraged orthodoxy could inflict; in the Gorky case both he and Howells turned tail discreetly, and a memorandum given by Paine shows what he was afraid of.

But, dead, he is safely beyond the gabble, and so, after a prudent interval, Paine begins the printing of the works in which, writing knowingly for posterity, he could set down his true philosophy without fear. That philosophy, thus displayed, is all that was needed to make his position secure. It shows that a coherent and understandable idea was underneath all his grotesqueries; that he was by no means the empty *enfant terrible* a pious legend has sought to make him; that he saw human life, not as a pleasant comedy, but in all the naked horror revealed to Rabelais and Swift; in brief, that the sharp eyes of a first-rate artist were in his head. "Your race, in its poverty," says the nephew of Satan in "The Mysterious Stranger," "has unquestionably one really effective weapon—laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution—these can lift at a colossal humbug—push it a little—weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. You are always fussing and fighting with your other weapons. Do you ever use that one? No; you leave it lying rusting. As a race, do you ever use it at all? No; you lack sense and the courage." . . . The sense was there—and the grave has supplied the courage. Here, indeed, is a dead man who tells a tale. . . .

As I say, "The Mysterious Stranger" will probably knock the breath out of all the literary girls, and return old Mark once more to the *index expurgatorius* of the Carnegie libraries. In the books of vapid "criticism" by college professors he will again suffer the pious deprecation that was his portion in the days of "A Tramp Abroad" and "Huckleberry Finn." Tears will be shed over his "morbidness," as they were once shed over his "flippancy." But all this braying of the long-eared will take no more from his stature as an artist than the ranting of Methodists will take from the stature of Dreiser. Mark is quite safe, professors or no professors. He is not only not shrinking; he is growing year by year. More and more the fact becomes plain that he was one of the first-rate men of his time, that his place as a literary artist was, and is, beyond that of any other American; that he stood head and shoulders above all the Holmses and Lowellses and Emersons who admitted him to their sodality so grudgingly, and patronized him so absurdly, and made asses of themselves so beautifully. Put the best work of the best of these men beside "Huckleberry Finn." It is like ranging Mendelssohn's Scotch symphony beside Beethoven's C Minor, or a landscape by an English academician

beside Rubens' "Chateau de Stein." Mark was simply beyond them. And he is beyond the stupidity of their heirs and assigns today.

§2

When Carl Van Vechten's first book, "Music After the Great War," was published a year or so ago, I lifted a modest hymn in praise of it, and at the same time denounced the other music critics of America for the fewness of their books, and for the intolerable dulness of that few. Nine-tenths of all our tomes upon the tone art have to be imported from England, or clawed from the baffling Deutsch. Our native Hanslicks—or, at all events, all save Huneker—either confine themselves to punditic trivialities in newspapers and concert programmes or write books so leathery and preposterous that only music teachers can read them. And even Huneker, in these later years, seems to be neglecting music for the lesser arts. His last full-length book of musical criticism was his "Overtones," dated 1912, and "Overtones" was pieced out with discourses on Flaubert and Nietzsche. Hence my rejoicing at first sight of this Prof. Van Vetchten, for his maiden volume was full of interesting ideas and sound information, and it was written in a style that made reading very pleasant.

Now comes his second book, "Music and Bad Manners" (*Knopf*)—thicker, bolder, livelier, better. In it, in fact, he definitely establishes a point of view and reveals a personality, and both have an undoubted attractiveness. In it he proves, following Huneker, that a man may be an American and still give all his thought to a civilized and noble art, and write about it with authority and address, and even find an audience that is genuinely interested in it. Huneker got his first breath in Philadelphia, and still, I believe, swears off his taxes there, and keeps the family pew at St. Ostendorf's. Van Vechten, despite his Knickerbocker name, comes from an even remoter outpost—to wit, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in the saleratus and osteopathy belt. A strange hatching for such a nest! But nevertheless, a bird of very bright plumage, and, after Huneker, the best now on view in the tonal aviary.

The worst thing in "Music and Bad Manners" is the chapter which gives the book its title—a somewhat banal collection of anecdotes about tenors with the manners of Duroc-Jerseys and concerts made gay by rough-house, almost fit for the long-winter-evening pages of *The Musician* or *The Étude*. His second chapter, made up of idle spoofing on moving-picture music, is nearly as bad: it might have been printed in *The Outlook*. But in Chapter III he spits on his hands, as it were, and settles down to business, and the result is a long, a learned and a very instructive dissertation on modern Spanish music—a school of tone so little understood, and even so little known, that it gets but twenty lines in Grove's Dictionary, and is elsewhere scarcely mentioned at all. Here is useful pioneering; here is also good criticism, for it arouses the curiosity of the reader about the thing described, and makes him want to know more about it. And following it come four chapters upon various aspects of that new music which now causes such a pother, with its gossamers of seconds and elevenths, its wild, niggerish rhythms, and its barbaric Russian cadences. The Slavs are at the bottom of it; its chief prophet is Igor Strawinsky and its plenipotentiary in New York is Leo Ornstein. Dr. Van Vechten constitutes himself its literary agent, and makes out a very plausible case for it. It outrages, as yet, the ear trained in the three B.'s—but the ear grows tougher as year chases year. Who cannot remember the time when even "Til Eulenspiegel" was denounced as cacophony? Nay, there are critics alive today, and drawing pay from New York papers, who got their start bellowing for more tunes in "Die Wälkure." Under the musical bridges the water rushes like a mill-race.

I shall not attempt a summary of Van Vechten's exposition. It deserves a first-hand reading, and besides, I am still but imperfectly converted to all these new prodigies of tone, and so I might distort the tale in the telling. Long hours over the piano score of Strawinsky's "Zhar-Ptitsa" have left me in a somewhat muddled state of mind. My fingers come to grief in the very introduction; there is a rhythm in the seventh measure which, so far at least, they have failed to convey to the keys. Again, I trip over the tonality at the beginning of the first tableau, "Zakoldovann'ii Sad Kashcheia": the signature is C major, but the actual key seems to be G sharp major, with a lowered third. In the third measure it fades into D major, and then into G minor, and then back into D major. Yet again, what a damnable thing is the dance of the fire-bird, *allegro rapace*. The flutes, I suppose, bear the weight of the curse in the orchestra; in the piano score there is a continuous flutish cadenza on a separate staff. God help the flutes! Yet again, how does one play the series of trills in the section called "Nastuplenie Utra?" Strange things, indeed, are in this ballet. Trills resolve themselves into ear-splitting double organ points in seconds. In one place there is a quintuplex shake on all five tones of the chord of the ninth, with the seventh lowered. Chords of the eleventh and thirteenth are piled upon one another; an ordinary discord sounds like a steal from Haydn; at one place, where Strawinsky actually borrows a whole figure from S. Coleridge Taylor's setting of "Many Thousands Gone," one gets the effect of a swallow of Pilsner after a hard day's work. Amazing stuff, indeed! But idiotic, unimaginable, *unmöglich?* Please, gents, no leading questions! I have not said so! By the Spring of 1920 it may all sound as flat and unprofitable as the whole-tone scale. The ear mellows. Who, today, can actually grasp the fact that Mozart was denounced for harmonic anarchies? Who can even *hear* the successive fifths in the minuet of the Jupiter symphony?

Van Vechten, as I have said, writes bouncingly and entertainingly. But like all critics he suffers from a literary disease: perhaps the critical frenzy itself is a pathological state. In his case it is the custom of putting a large part of the discourse into parentheses. His essay on Spanish music, for example, runs to 75 pages, and upon every one of them save ten there is a parenthesis, and sometimes half a dozen. He puts whole sentences within the curved lines; sometimes even whole paragraphs. A few days on Blackwell's Island would cure him of this malady; uncorrected, it puts clumsiness into what is otherwise a very graceful style. . . . The book is bound in boards of a staring pea-green. At first blush the color seems gratuitously strident, but second thoughts bring it into harmony with the music discussed within. The taste of Mr. Knopf, the publisher, is usually to be trusted. He is bold, but he always seems to know what he is doing. His career, by the way, deserves watching. In little more than a year of independent publishing he has brought together a formidable list of interesting books, and many of them appear to be selling. The publishing business has room for a man of his enterprise and intelligence. Most of the older and richer houses are run by old women in pantaloons; there is no great trade in America, indeed, which shows a vaster imbecility. Reflection and discrimination seem to have been almost completely divorced from publishing; books are printed for any and all reasons save the reason that they are worth printing. Some of the largest houses in the country devote themselves chiefly to merchanting garbage that should make any self-respecting publisher blush. If it were not for the influence of the big English publishers things would probably be even worse. They at least send over a few dozen fairly decent books every month and so save the face of the trade.

§3

One of Knopf's enterprises is the publication of a series of plays, original and translated, to be called, somewhat absurdly, the Borzoi Plays. Number one of the series is a translation of Michael Arzibashef's "War"; number two is "Moloch," by Beulah Marie Dix; number three is a translation of Ludwig Thoma's "Moral," and number four is a new translation of Nicolay Gogol's familiar Russian comedy, "The Inspector-General." Of these, the most interesting is the Thoma piece—a sharp and racy comedy, well Englished by Charles Recht. The piece should have even greater success in the American theatre than it has had on the Continent, for the situation it deals with is far more American than European. In brief, it sets forth the results of an anti-vice campaign in a German city. When, at the hot behest of certain vociferous virtuosi of virtue, the police raid the leading bagnio of the town, they capture, among other things, the diary of the estimable landlady, one Mme. d'Hauteville. They have grasped, alas, a lion by the tail, for the diary contains a minute record of calls made upon the good lady by most of the dignitaries of the place, including the chief howler of the *Sittlichkeitsverein*, or Society for the Suppression of Vice. Worse, a very high personage, a *Hoheit* no less, is also on her books. . . . The end may be guessed. With the evidence against their prisoner complete, the police have to let her go, and what is more, to silence her. In this business the local Comstock lends an important hand; he steals the diary from the police and so saves his own and many another goose-fleshed neck. The closing scene shows him receiving a decoration for his services to public morality.

A pungent and excellent play. A little masterpiece of irony. That Thoma remains almost unknown on this side of the ocean is quite amazing. The late Percival Pollard hailed "Moral" at least seven years ago, and there is a whole chapter upon the piece in his book, "Masks and Minstrels of New Germany" (*Luce*), published in 1911. Thoma has been editor of *Simplicissimus*, the greatest of all comic papers, since 1899, and has contributed hundreds of sketches and stories to its pages, chiefly under the *nom de plume* of Peter Schlemiehl. A Rabelaisian capacity for burlesque is in him; he reaches an almost screaming absurdity in his *"Lausbubengeschichten"* (tales of boyhood) and his *"Briefwechsel eines bayrischen Landtagabgeordneten"* (letters of an illiterate member of the Bavarian Lower House). Here the humor is laid on with a shovel; the very ribs of the reader are made to ache. But in Thoma's plays there is a finer method. In "Moral" he reaches genuine satire, and in two other pieces, *"Die Lokalbahn"* (The Local Railway) and *"Die Medaille"* (The Medal), he comes near to the same achievement. In his *"Kleinstadtgeschichten"* (Tales of a Small Town) one finds the precise idea of George Bernard Shaw's "O'Flaherty, V. C." Many of his other ideas have been quietly borrowed by scriveners in the vulgate, but so far as I know, "Moral" is the first of his works actually to be translated. His peasant comedies, of course, defy the translator. Much of their humor depends upon vagaries of dialect, and the rest is grounded upon customs and habits of mind that would be wholly unintelligible to Americans.

Thoma is 50 years old and was born at Oberammergau, the home of the Passion Play. His father was a Chief Forester in the Bavarian highlands, and the boy grew up amid the icy heights of the eastern Alps. He was destined for the parental profession and in 1886 he entered the School of Forestry at Aschaffenburg. But he found that the new science of forestry, as imparted at that academy, had far too much science in it and far too little hunting and camping-out, and so he transferred himself to the law—obviously a senseless exchange, for he found the law even worse, and though he got his doctorate in 1893 and hung out his shingle at Dachau, he was never happy at the bar.

Politics interested him more; it offered the best substitute for the wild life that he loved. He became a spell-binder for the National Liberal party and began to write political pamphlets and pasquinades. The dismissal of Bismarck, he says, filled him with the utmost bitterness against the throne. In 1897 he moved to Munich, and two years later became editor of *Simplicissimus*. There he has remained, and since the death of Otto Julius Bierbaum, in 1910, he has been accepted as the first of German humorists. We have no one in America precisely like him. Our comic writers, almost without exception, show a naif and somewhat provincial character. Even in Mark Twain and George Ade one constantly glimpses a peasant making fun of the great world; in the eternal battle between the Davidsbündler and the Philistines, they frankly take the side of the Philistines. Thoma is more European, more Continental, more a man of the world. In his wildest grotesqueries, as in those of Bierbaum, Roda Roda and Anatole France, one always finds an air of sophistication, an undeniable grace, a keen critical sense. Bierbaum dedicated his comic poems and sketches to such men as Franz von Lenbach, Hugo von Hoffmansthal and Richard Strauss. Imagine Ellis Parker Butler dedicating a book to Sargent, or to Percy Mackaye, or to Walter Damrosch! There is a difference.!

§4

Various other interesting plays are among the month's books. For example, "Six Plays of the Yiddish Theatre," translated by Dr. Isaac Goldberg (*Luce*). The authors represented are David Pinski, Sholom Ash, Perez Hirschbein and Solomon J. Rabinowitsch. Dr. Goldberg's selections are excellent; they range from a biblical drama by Pinski to a rough farce by Rabinowitsch and an extraordinarily effective little folk-play by Ash. The last-named piece is the best in the book; there is in it, indeed, something of the unfathomable mystery and poetry of the Synge plays; it is astonishing that none of our Little Theatres has discovered it. Ash himself is the chief present hope of the Yiddish theatre; he alone, among all the Yiddish dramatists, deserves to be called a first-rate literary artist. Ten or twelve years ago, during the height of the late Jacob Gordin's fame, the East Side theaters were producing some of the best plays to be seen in New York. But since then their audiences have become gradually Americanized, and as a result their taste has been debauched by the trade goods of Broadway. Such stupid bosh as "The Lion and the Mouse" has been translated, and its influence grows painfully visible. The most popular Yiddish playwrights of today are not the Ashes and Pinskis, but makers of tin-pot melodrama like Rocoff and Zolatorefsky and tear-squeezers like Libin. It is no longer a pleasant adventure to enter the garlic belt on a winter night and grapple with the difficulties of Slavic-Syraic-German. In the palmy days of Gordin it was common for the Yiddish theatres to do plays by Ibsen, Hauptmann and the Russians. One of the best performances of *Nora* that I remember was given by Mme. Kaminsky, a very beautiful Russian Jewess. It was in those days that new Nazimovas and Kaliches were being discovered in the Ghetto weekly, and all the Broadway critics were in a sweat of enthusiasm. But now the vernacular playhouses devote themselves chiefly to rough operettas and idiotic melodramas. The more civilized Jews no longer go to their own theatres. Instead, they swarm to Irving Place.

Another play-book of much interest is the volume of "Three Plays" by Padraic Colum (*Little-Brown*). The pieces in the collection are "The Fiddler's House," "The Land" and "Thomas Muskerry." All of them were printed half a dozen or more years ago in the famous Abbey Theatre Series of plays, but the thin little volumes of that series now bring a premium, and so it is good to see them done again, and in so dignified and